MASTERS OF THE MARSH

AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE ISLEÑOS
OF LOWER ST. BERNARD PARISH, LOUISIANA
WITH AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the late 18th century and continuing through the 19th and early 20th century, the water regions of St. Bernard and Plaquemine Parishes were occupied by Canary Islanders and immigrants from other areas of Spain such as Galicia, Asturias, La Montana, and Catalonia (Armistead, 1981). These people and their descendants settled at Shell Beach, Yscloskey, Reggio, Delacroix Island and other neighborhoods of lower St. Bernard Parish. Known collectively as Islenos, these people are the subject of this report.

It was during the governorship of Bernardo Galvez that the first Canary Islanders were transported to Louisiana. The Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society of St. Bernard observed 1978 as the bicentennial year of the Isleno migration. Between 1778 and 1783, concentrations of these soldier-farmers were placed in Iberville, Ascension, and St. Bernard Parishes. The Iberville Parish colony at Galvez Town on the confluence of the Amite River and Bayou Manchac was short-lived (Scramuzza, 1930). The Ascension Parish settlements disintegrated in composition with larger, slave-operated plantations of French entrepreneurs, although today some remnants still survive in the brulees around Donaldsonville (Hawley, 1976). It was in fecund St. Bernard Parish that the Islenos were, until recently, able to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity.

Like their compatriots in Ascension Parish, the St. Bernard Islenos were small farmers situated amidst large plantations. For various reasons, many of them could not compete with larger enterprises. They, therefore, surrendered their holdings and moved into the fringe of the marshland in lower St. Bernard Parish during the 19th and 20th centuries. These locations were farther removed from Creole and American influences of southern Louisiana

than had been their original settlement at Terre-aux-Boeufs. Through the years they acquired a remarkable body of lore on deriving a livelihood from the land and water. Until the 1930s, people in the Delacroix Island area continued to farm the higher ridges and hummocks in the marsh, even transporting mules by barge to plow their insular plots of arable land. They are probably best known for, and proudest of, their expertise in exploiting the wild life of the marsh and Gulf of Mexico. Trapping, alligator hunting, deer hunting, shrimping, crabbing, oyster cultivation and dredging, fishing and duck hunting are occupations at which they have excelled and prospered.

Those Islenos who did not venture into the marsh adapted to the plantation and small town way of life, thereby becoming more creolized. That is, they tended to interact more with the earlier-settled French and other European national groups who had resided in St. Bernard from the earliest part of the 18th century. Although they share names and Spanish origins with the lower St. Bernard Islenos, they see themselves, and are seen by others, as being distinct. Their fisherman-relatives refer to them as Torneros, people who live at "the turn" (of the river). Until today, definite cultural and political cleavages are apparent between these two groups of descendants of common Iberian ancestors.

The method pursued in securing information for this report did not follow the normal course of ethnographic research. Conventionally, the ethnographer lives among his people for at least a year and attempts to participate as much as possible in the life of his community. Such a procedure was not possible in the present research. Since I had teaching and administrative duties at the University of New Orleans, I was unable to devote the full time which normally is called for in such an undertaking. As a rule, I have relied on interviews which were carried on in or near the homes

of Islenos. I did participate directly in such economic and recreational enterprises as trapping, hunting, and oyster dredging. I also conducted a survey at Delacroix Island and Yscloskey during the summer and fall of 1981. Although the information that I secured in the survey is valuable and helped illuminate important aspects of language usage, ethnicity, household composition, employment, and kinship, I was restricted by time limitations and availability of informants. I will take up the question of further research at the conclusion of this report.

A persistent quartet of themes runs through this analysis. Alliteratively, they are: ethnicity, economy, endogamy, and ecology. These topics interrelate. Although it is useful to separate various themes of an ethnography, because there is such overlapping in these important aspects of Isleno life, I have not always been able to do so with any degree of precision. Consequently, the reader will find that although I have set aside Chapter 3 for a discussion of economic pursuits, it was inconvenient to leave out items and discussion that pertain to ethnicity, values, and social relations in this chapter. I hope that I have avoided repetition to the point of tedium. I trust that the concluding statement will integrate the material and present to the reader a holistic view of the interactions of Islenos and their environment.

CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Beginning in biology and spreading rapidly to other fields, a new synthetic view encompassing life and its consequences has provided a coordinating value to studies such as these. The "organismic revolution" saw modern development in the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy. He saw "systems theory" as a holistic view of nature, "a recognition of reciprocal relations among

the various systems of an organism and of interactions among organisms." (Anderson, 1973:180).

The anthropological approach to humans and ecology has been conditioned by biological considerations tempered with the reality of coming to grips with the fact that humans possess culture. This body of organized, and not so organized, knowledge in a group is seen as a major determining factor of our humanity. It is also the major tool for survival of the human species. However, bringing ecology and culture together in an attempt to describe and explain the behavior of humans is conducive to creating arguments which can obfuscate rather than clarify a body of data. It is tempting to become monocausal, to assume that a whole congeries of interrelated traits of human behavior are the result of a single topic or interaction. To say that all stems from economics or geography or religion is, of course, naive. The approach that has intrigued, perhaps seduced anthropologists, in the past few decades has been that of systems theory: description of the reciprocal relations among the various sytems of an organism. My intention in this study is to present what seem to be the reciprocal relations among Isleño environment, adaptive strategy, social relations, values, language, self-awareness, and how these relate to the wider society. I use the term ecology in the sense that Anderson applies it: "the study of entire assemblages of living organisms and their physical milieus, which together constitute integrated systems." (Anderson, 1973:182) I interpret the term adaptation as the process by which humans make effective use for productive ends, of the energy potential of their habitat. (Cohen, 1974:46) Every culture can be seen as a strategy of adaptation. Each represents a unique system for extracting energy from the environment. The use of this term has guided my identification of the Islenos as a group which uses a specific adaptive strategy. People rather

close to them in historical background and location, the Torneros, I have excluded from consideration because they follow a different mode of adaptation. This adaptation does involve choices. I have tried to bring considerations of ecology to bear upon this study. I hope that the information that I present and discuss will help the reader accept the overview which I have designed in the last chapter.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

My informants range in age from 11 to 91. However, the great majority of them were elderly people. Their perceptions of change during their lifetimes were instructive in analyzing the dynamics of marsh culture. I believe that the urgent priority of my future research among the Islenos is to mine even more persistently this lode of precious information.

I have attempted consistently to make the reader aware of such changes as were revealed by long-lived informants. It is conventional in ethnographic introductions to inform the reader about the "ethnographic present". This usually refers to a time before the cultural group in question was severely disturbed by intrusive forces such as the coming of colonial development or modernization. Such a discrete point in time does not apply to this work. I hope that the time period of a particular event or custom will be made clear by the context of the discussion.

Rural St. Bernard Parish, where rapidly expanding suburbia ends, extends from Poydras to Hopedale. Although I have interviewed some people on this approximately seventeen-mile stretch of Louisiana Highway 45, I have generally concentrated on the communities of Delacroix Island and Yscloskey. Delacroix sees itself and is seen in the eyes of other Islenos as the hearth or cultural home of these people. "The Island", as it is referred to, is a linear community of about one hundred sixty-five residences, a few bars,

grocery stores and marinas, strung along a narrow ridge of relatively high ground (all high ground in St. Bernard Parish is relative) on the east bank of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. A road separates dwellings from the bayou bank where wharves and piers are constructed. To these are moored the boats upon which so much of the livelihood of the Isleños depends. Yscloskey is slightly different in plan from the Island. It lies at the confluence of Bayou La Loutre and Bayou Yscloskey and extends along Bayou Yscloskey to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. Residences are constructed on both sides of the Bayou and the beginning of a grid pattern has taken shape. A few streets, parallel and perpendicular to Bayou Yscloskey, give this community more width in contrast to the linear Delacroix settlement. I counted one hundred twenty-four residences at Yscloskey.

Estimates of the total Isleño population range from eight to ten thousand people in St. Bernard Parish. This includes many who do not have Spanish surnames but are able to trace Isleño connections through the maternal side of their family. Nevertheless, I have concentrated on two tiny communities which exemplify the traditional Isleño life and marsh adaptation. First, these two settlements are manageable in light of the personalized research of ethnography. Also, the two communities are connected in that people from the Island began to settle the Yscloskey-Shell Beach region in the early part of this century. But as will be seen, Yscloskey was never so isolated from the rest of the Parish as was Delacroix during most of its history.

CHAPTER ONE

LAND AND WATER

To understand the Islenos or even define who they are, one must first become familiar with their habitat. Unlike the urban dwellers a few miles to their northwest in Chalmette and New Orleans, the residents of lower St. Bernard Parish are intimately involved with their natural surroundings. The boundary of their lives is the system of estuaries, brackish and saline marshes that buffer the coastline of Louisiana against erosion of the currents of the Gulf of Mexico, storms, and hurricanes. These natural systems have been drastically changed by humans in the recent past. An overview of the processes of natural geomorphological processes and human modification of these processes is important for the reader to comprehend since so much of the values and material culture of the Islenos is affected by their interaction with this fluid environment.

St. Bernard Parish comprises the easternmost coastline of Louisiana which is the portion most closely associated with the recent alluviation of the Mississippi River. (Russell, 1936:1) The parish is bounded by Orleans Parish to the south and west, and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. (Coastal Environments, 1976:5)

The land area of the parish apparently has always been difficult to estimate due to the actions of erosion and deposition. Russell (1936:14-15) cites several surveys. In 1884, Hilgard opined that there were 680 square miles of land broken down into five miles of woodland, twenty-five miles of alluvial ridges and six hundred seventy-five miles of marsh and prairie. Between 1880 and 1930 the loss of land in St. Bernard Parish is supposed to have been sixty-three square miles. Russell cites another source (Sondereggar, 1935) as characterizing the area as 617 square miles being composed of thirteen square miles in agriculture, eight in pasture, woodland and suburban, sixteen

in woodland, one hundred eighty-three in sea marsh, thirty-three in trapping lands and three hundred sixty-one in miscellaneous (chiefly marsh). Gagliano, et al, (Coastal Environments, 1976:51) offers contradictions as well. Initially stating that the area of the parish was about 1,400 square miles of land and water with the greatest amount being in water and wetlands, he breaks down the land use categories into acreage with a total of 1,527,201 acres which equals 2,386.5 square miles. Water (1,212,770 acres) and wetlands (265,525 acres) comprise 96% of the area of the parish. Accurate measurement of such terrain is difficult. Russell explains why precise depiction of wetland territory is implausible if one relies on past cartographic sources.

> Several of the U.S.G.S. quadrangles were reprinted at later times but without revision of culture or topography. As a whole, this map of the Lower Delta is fairly accurate in regions that were thickly settled at the date of the survey and along outer shores. The degree of accuracy decreases towards marshy interiors, where generalization, omission, and improper location reduces its value to practical negligibility.
>
> (Russell, 1936:31)

The parish is part of the Louisiana Coastal Plain. Its geologic structure reflects the interaction that has taken place within the past 10,000 years between the lands built up by the Mississippi River and the marine forces of the Gulf of Mexico. Its structure is essentially narrow coastal levees and broad marshlands intersected by natural and man-made channels. (Coastal Environments, 1976:9) A map of St. Bernard Parish reminds one of a lacy fan with the ridges comprising the handle and ribs while the lacy image derives from the marshland and bodies of water that interact with it. The parish is a product of the sediment deposited by the Mississippi River in several delta-building phases. About 4,000 years ago, the river began to form a delta in St. Bernard Parish through the Bayou La Loutre channel. A second delta-building phase, centering on Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs as a main channel,

lasted for about 500 years. A third phase of delta building began about 3,500 years ago through Bayou des Familles and lasted nearly 1,500 years. The last of the phases involved in building the St. Bernard delta was that which produced Bayou Sauvage. It continued to build land until about 700 years ago. Then the Mississippi River gradually shifted its course and sediment distribution until it completely abandoned the St. Bernard area. After the Mississippi River changed its course, the Parish landscape experienced considerable alteration. As a result of marine forces, the Parish is now estuarine in character.

> Large bays and broad intertidal marshes make it one of the most productive zones of Louisiana. Without sedimentation, however, the coastal area is gradually subsiding and lands along the Parish-Gulf interface are eroded away by the continuous attack of marine forces.
>
> (Coastal Environments, 1976:9)

Russell has colorfully limned these slow but persistent forces. Writing of both Plaquemine and St. Bernard coastal geomorphology, he characterized the riverine and gulf interaction as being a contest . . .

> . . . between factors determined by the Gulf, ever making for ultimate smoothness, and those determined by the Mississippi River, ever active in producing self-assertive regularity. The western half of the coast exhibits victory for the Gulf. Shores have retreated before its waves, beaches have been heaped up as long ridges, essentially straight in pattern, or only gently sinuate. The eastern half of the coast exhibits victory for the river, on the whole, but river victory is rather ephemeral, being sharply localized where most complete, and subject to erasure upon the slightest relaxation of causal forces... The River, as if fretful and dissatisfied with its uneven chance of victory, moves from point to point in its first and secondary lines of attack. At times it crevasses, thrusting arms across supporting marshes and out into the Gulf. At other times it abandons its entire scheme of attack, shifting the struggle to the front of an entirely new subdelta, or in extreme cases, to practically a new delta.
>
> (Russell, 1936:193-94)

As the geomorphology of the area can be distilled into a metaphor of struggle, a battle between River and Gulf, so also can the cultural and historical processes of Isleño settlement and adaptation be envisioned as a constant battle between them and both the River and the Gulf. Indeed, the main theme of their ecological perception and response is that of adaptation to salt water intrusion.

High alluvial ridges along the present and former courses of Bayou La Loutre form the backbone of St. Bernard Parish and attest to the importance of this old channel of the Mississippi River. The high ground above the present head of the bayou abruptly departs from the man-made river levee at Poydras and runs almost due east. Such settlements as St. Bernard, Toca, Estopinal and Reggio line Louisiana Highway 46 which follows the high ground. At Reggio, the ridge forks, with one branch leading southward along Bayou Terre-Aux-Boeufs past Delacroix Island ultimately to Mozambique Point in Breton Sound. With some bending, the main branch continues eastward past Yscloskey and Hopedale, ultimately to Point Chicot, the western boundary between Chandeleur and Breton Sounds. Bayou Yscloskey is the most upstream distributary of old Bayou La Loutre and leads to Lake Borgne at Shell Beach. (Russell, 1936:42-43) The whole parish is essentially the abandoned subdelta of Bayou La Loutre. The general pattern, like that of the Balize subdelta of Plaquemine Parish, is that distributary streams are straight and radiate like fingers of a hand from some central location. The center of the St. Bernard subdelta is not far from the junction of Bayou La Loutre and Bayou Petre. Other distributaries were established farther west. These include Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and Bayou Yscloskey. Irregularly spaced crevasses have established channels that contribute to the general drainage pattern. (Russell, 1936:71) That is, the drainage pattern that existed prior to human intervention.

By the time of the first European settlement, the St. Bernard subdelta had been effectively abandoned. The deposition of river soil was practically complete as far as Yscloskey. Overflow water was directed either northward into Lake Borgne or southeastward into the River Aux Chene delta-flank depression. Artificial levees have completed the subdelta decline. "With Bayou La Loutre cut off entirely, submergence holds full sway and has progressed to a point where over half of the subdelta surface now rests below sea level." (Russell, 1936:105-107).

VEGETATION

At the time of European settlement the natural levees of the Parish must have been thickly forested. In the 18th century, the rich alluvium of this high ground was prime farm land. Initially, indigo, then cotton, and finally sugar were the main cash crops cultivated by the early French settlers. Generally, a plantation economy driven by slave labor was the system that prevailed until Union army occupation in the early days of the Civil War. After the war the plantations were slowly transformed into small farms growing truck for the urban population of New Orleans. At the beginning of the 20th century, systematic logging of cypress swamps began. This continued until nearly all the virgin cypress forests had been cut. Since the 1920s the parish has changed in the direction of recreation and later, suburbanization. Proximity to New Orleans and excellent environment for water-oriented sports have made it an ideal place to live. Since the 1950s, urbanization has accelerated. Today the wetlands and valuable natural resources are in danger of being lost to the needs and demands of urbanization, industrialization, and natural forces. (Coastal Environments, 1976:17)

Vegetation on the natural levees consists of live oak (quercus virginiana) and other bottomland hardwoods. Most of these hardwoods have been cleared and replaced by cropland and urban areas. The remaining bottomland hardwoods are located primarily on the flanks and distal ends of the alluvial ridges. (Burke and Associates, ND:2) Other areas in the coastal zone with woody vegetation are the cheniers, beach ridges, salt domes, Indian middens and spoil areas. Cheniers are old beaches now stranded in the marsh. The term is used in the southern part of the Mississippi delta to mean any high ground and ordinarily refers to the oaks (Fr. chêne) which are the dominant trees covering such ridges. (Russell, 1936:45) The chenier oak forest includes pecan (carya illinoensis), hackberry (Celtis laevigata), willow and chinese tallow. The underbrush is primarily palmetto (Sabal minor), in elevated areas but this changes to rattlebox (Daubentonia sp.) and grasses like wiregrass (Spartina patens) in the lower areas. (Burke and Associates, ND:2)

Forested wetlands fringe the natural levees. The dominant trees are bald cypress (Taxodium distichum) and tupelo gum (Nyssa aquatica). As mentioned above, little of this remains in St. Bernard Parish. Most of the wetlands are non-forested or marsh. The marshes of the coastal plain are dominated by the grass-sedge-rush community of plants. The main types of wetlands that exist in St. Bernard Parish are brackish, saline, and intermediate marsh as well as recently modified wetlands. Typical vegetation of the intermediate marsh is maiden cane (Panicum hemitomon), wiregrass, and sawgrass (Cladium jamaicense). Typical vegetation of the brackish marsh includes wiregrass, three-cornered grass (Scirpus olney) which is so important as a muskrat food, coco (Scirpus robustus), saltgrass (Distichlis spicata) and black rush (Juncus roemerianus). The saline marsh is typified by oystergrass (Spartiba alterniflora), glasswort (Salicornia sp.), saltwort (Batis

maritima), saltgrass, black rush and black mangrove (Avicennia nitida). The modified wetlands are areas that have been leveed, ditched, filled or drained. In other words, surface features and hydrology have been altered or restricted to the degree that natural wetland processes no longer occur. These marsh or swamp areas were modified for the purpose of urbanization, flood protection, navigation, farming, mining, spoil disposal, or waterfowl management. (Burke and Associates, ND:2)

Brackish marsh occupies the area south of the natural levee to the northern shore of Lake Jean Louis Robin. North of the habitable ridge, the brackish marsh occupies the southern and eastern shores of Lake Borgne. Saline marsh is located in the far eastern end of the Parish. Most of the outlying islands which are situated between the Gulf and the interior are covered with saline marsh.

Modified wetlands are found between the southern bank of Bayou Bienvenu and the natural levees near Arabi and Chalmette and along the northern bank of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). This latter area was modified as a result of dredging spoil being spread over formerly brackish marsh. There remain narrow strips of intermediate marsh between the natural levees and the modified wetlands created by the MRGO north of Hopedale and Verret. (Burke and Associates, ND:1-2)

It is the marshland that is so important to Isleño livelihood. This habitat produces fish, oysters, shrimp, crabs and fur-bearing animals. Some species require the marsh environment for their entire life cycle. For others it is important during some phases of the life cycle. The majority of the offshore fisheries catch in the area is dependent on the marsh as a nursery zone. (Coastal Environments, 1976:21) Unfortunately, this piscine incubator and habitat is under attack from both human and natural forces.

HUMAN ALTERATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

In the early days of parish settlement, the major transportation routes followed the natural levees along the waterways and the waterways themselves. This land and water system of movement satisfied the transportation needs of the parish with minimum disturbance of the natural environment. (Coastal Environments, 1976:19) Today, most roads are still located on these levees and water transport is still an important resource. However, a recently constructed waterway has made a considerable impact upon St. Bernard Parish.

The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) is the most significant man-made navigational channel. It was built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is less important than the Mississippi River in terms of numbers of vessels and tonnage of cargo moved through it. In the view of most Islenos, its contribution to environmental losses have thus far been greater than any of its predicted economic gains.(Coastal Environments, 1976:19) The MRGO is seventy miles long, five hundred feet across, and thirty-six feet deep. It extends from the Intercoastal Waterway and Michoud through the wetlands bordering the southern shore of Lake Borgne and crosses Breton Sound just north of Breton Island. The wetland route was selected instead of a route through Lake Borgne suggested by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission because of perceived greater expense of forming and maintaining a channel in the Lake bottom. The major objective of the channel was to provide a shorter route between the Gulf and the Port of New Orleans. Gagliano, et al state that this objective was not attained. The distance has been reduced but more time is needed to travel it. Vessels must reduce their speed for safety due to the relatively narrow channel width and shallow depth. The traffic using the channel is considerably less than anticipated. The majority of vessels still use the Mississippi River. Only a small percent

use the MRGO. Opponents claim that the channel has not been of any direct benefit to St. Bernard Parish. No new jobs have been created and the ecological and social impacts of the channel have been "highly detrimental" to the parish as a whole. (Coastal Environments, 1976:47)

The MRGO destroyed approximately 4,686 acres of marsh and disturbed about 1,680 acres of shallow open water. Dredge spoil enclosed within dikes covered 4,518 acres of open water and 12,540 acres of marsh. The MRGO also provides an easy access for storms and hurricanes to enter the most inland parts of the parish. (Coastal Environments, 1976:47) An Isleno told me that "the channel is like a loaded pistol pointed at New Orleans."

In 1972, the consulting firm of Coastal Environments, Inc. identified and analyzed ten environmentally determined "management units" in St. Bernard. This was amended to an additional fourteen management units in 1976. The impact of the MRGO on most of these management units has been drastic. The essential complaints are: that fauna and flora have been destroyed due to drainage patterns having been changed, resulting in different water-flow patterns; salinity has increased which resulted in the loss of vegetation adapted to brackish marsh conditions; tidal channels that maintained salinity of wetlands have become blocked; and the impounding of spoil has halted fresh water distribution. (Coastal Environments, 1976:23-35) Canals constructed by oil companies have caused similar problems although not on the grand scale of the MRGO. Natural erosive forces of the Gulf of Mexico are also at work deteriorating the coastline of the parish. For example, the Lake Borgne shoreline is eroding at the rate of four and one-half feet a year! (Coastal Environments, 1976:31) People who intimately know the marsh, claim that human activity such as levee and canal construction have altered the fresh water flow of the marsh. One eighty-five year-old informant stated that when

he was a child, women washed their clothes in Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and people at Delacroix Island could drink the water from the Bayou.

Gagliano, Meyer-Arendt, and Wicker have recently assessed the cumulative land loss in the Mississippi River deltaic plain. Their studies show that the long-term trend of net progradation . . .

> . . . which persisted through most of the past 5,000 years, was reversed during the late nineteenth century, and that during the twentieth century land-loss rates have accelerated geometrically. Within the 11,500 square mile study area, land-loss rates have progressed from approximately 6.7 square miles per year in 1913 to a projected 39.4 square miles per year in 1980. The greatest loss has occurred in the wetlands, but barrier islands and natural levee ridges are also disappearing at a very high rate . . .
>
> Apparent causes of the high rates of land loss include the harnessing of the Mississippi River by Levees and control structures which reduce tendencies toward natural diversion and funnel valuable sediments to deep offshore waters. Additional factors include canal dredging and accelerated subsidence related to mineral extraction, both of which are often associated with saltwater intrusion. The net effect is a rapidly accelerating man-induced transgression of a major coastal system.
>
> (Gagliano, Meyer-Arendt, and Wicker, 1981:295)

St. Bernard Parish retains 257,816 acres according to Gagiliano, et al. However, the 1980 projected loss rate is 1,695 acres. The estimated life expectancy of St. Bernard is 152 years: "A great natural catastrophe is occuring in the deltaic plan of coastal Louisiana." (Gagliano, Meyer-Arendt, and Wicker,1981:298) The Islenos are very much aware of the proportions of this catastrophe since they dwell in its midst.

AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DECLINE

Because there are such drastic economic consequences of the deterioration of the natural environment, the Islenos are acutely aware of changes in their habitat over the years. Their long settlement in the same location also gives them a sense of historical change. A grandfather can impress upon his grandson, just returned from hunting, how he, himself, in the 1920s could shoot scores of rabbits where his descendant shot only two or three. To the Islenos, saltwater intrusion is a very intimate fact of everyday existence. It is the waters of the Gulf that eat away shorelines, change brackish marshes to saline with ensuing loss of vegetation and muskrat population, cause subsidence of "high ground", and deny cultivation possibilities to areas which were formerly gardens. In conversations with Islenos, these types of comments are made:

> It used to be that the water in Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs was fresh enough to drink. It was really river water but levees have cut all the flow now. (86-year-old Delacroix Island man)
>
> All my live oaks are dying now from saltwater. I guess that I'll try to plant some cypresses. (63-year-old Florissant man)
>
> I remember when I was a little girl that we used to roast acorns on the wood stove. I hardly see any oak trees around any more. (61-year-old Delacroix Island woman)
>
> I remember here at the Island that across the Bayou was high ground. Now it is marsh. (58-year-old Delacroix Island man)
>
> I remember here at Shell Beach that we used to play baseball at Fort Proctor. The fort was well over 600 feet from the shore of the lake. Now the lake is washing away the foundation of the Fort. (70-year-old Yscloskey man)
>
> When we went duck hunting in the old days we had to drag a pirogue to hunt in the marsh at land-locked ponds and lakes. Now there are too many canals (made by the oil companies). Now I guess that it's too easy for the Sports to get to the hunting. (60-year-old Delacroix man)

> There used to be plenty of deer and even bear near the Island. Now you never see them. (84-year-old Delacroix Island man)

> When spots were harder to get to, the hunting and fishing was better. I remember paddling to St. Malo (from Shell Beach) to hunt and loving it. Although on the way back I always swore that I never would do it again. (The inference here is that difficult access to fisheries and hunting grounds deterred "Sports" and outsiders from competing with the Islenos.) (70-year-old Yscloskey man)

Pertinent to the last statement, is the following conversation with a Shell Beach resident and his father-in-law about the elder man's prowess as a fisherman and trapper. The younger man coaxed him, "Tell him what was the biggest haul that you made in a seine." He shyly answered: "Seven thousand pounds, all trout and redfish." "How many consecutive days did you catch a hundred rats?" "Fourteen straight days. One day I caught one hundred fifty-six rats, another day (in that stretch of fourteen days) I caught one hundred thirty-seven." "What is the most shrimp you caught?" "One hundred barrels in one day." (A barrel holds about two hundred ten pounds.)

When I asked why all this abundance disappeared, the answer I received from the two men was "Too many fishermen and better boats. Also pollution."

Nineteen eighty-one was the very best year in brown shrimp production, but no one that I know of had such luck as the old Isleño quoted above had had in the old days. His assessment of the reasons for decline is part of the truth. Better access to what had been traditional Isleno fishing grounds by outsiders and pollution of formerly prolific areas tells only part of the story. The following statement from a 52-year-old Yscloskey resident completes the picture:

> The ship channel (MRGO) screwed up the flow of the tide around Shell Beach and ruined both duck hunting and shrimping. The Corps of Engineers would not be able to get away with this today. There's too many ecology groups.

I do not believe that it is an exaggeration to state that the Corps of Engineers is unpopular with many Islenos. The land and marsh and species that inhabit them could regenerate if untouched by human manipulation. However, projects such as the MRGO cause irreparable damage to a fragile environment. It is easy to get into an argument by defending the Corps of Engineers. The 1980 chemical spill which occurred when two ships collided near Yscloskey in the summer of that year did not further the reputation of the Corps nor did it enhance the desirability of the MRGO. Residents of the area got scant satisfaction from crowing "I told you so" as they lost money and suffered discomfort when fishing was halted in the area.

The Isleno environment is both abundant and dangerous. It provides a form of security to those who have mastered its rules but it is a tenuous security. Adapting to their watery ecosystem demanded that the Islenos cultivate an awareness of their own capabilities as well as dependence upon neightbors and kinfolk. They are often put at risk but the psychological and economic rewards of their habitat make living in lower St. Bernard Parish appealing. In this report, I hope to describe some aspects of their life and the values that are so important in sustaining their adaptation.

CHAPTER TWO
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St. Bernard Parish has always had close association with the city of New Orleans. The city was founded in 1718 and became the capital of Louisiana in 1728. As settlers moved downstream from the initial settlement, the history of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes began. The colony remained a French possession until 1763 when it was ceded to Spain. It is this Spanish tenure as colonial overlord that is most relevant to Isleno history and culture. The colony was returned to France in 1800 but this latter stage of French domination lasted only until 1803 when the entire Louisiana territory was purchased by the United States from Napoleon for $15,000,000.00.

There was no concerted attempt by the French to colonize the St. Bernard region although as early as 1723 there are records of grants made to Celestine Chiapella and Magloire Guichard. Other concessions were later made to individuals who bear names such as Toutant Beauregard, Ducros, De la Ronde, Villere, De Fazande and de Marigny. (Kaltenbaugh 1970:6)

In 1776, Bernard de Galvez became the Spanish governor of Louisiana. He assumed administration of an economically sick enterprise. A salient problem which is also germane to this report was that there were vast empty spaces that should be filled up with colonists if the territory was to be developed and defended from the nearby English. But by 1776 a change was imminent.

During that year, a young Spanish officer, Francisco Bouligny, returned to Spain from Louisiana. He wrote a memoir pertaining to the perilous situation that existed in Louisiana. This report was well received by Galvez's uncle, Jose de Galvez, Minister of the Indies. Bouligny detailed Louisiana's economic plight and stressed the importance of populating the

province with Spaniards, or at least with people unsympathetic to the British. He explained that, as tension mounted between Spain and Great Britain, Louisiana was becoming increasingly vulnerable to British invasion. English colonizing efforts had been successful in West Florida in the early 1700s and British populations were close to the Louisiana border. Consequently, the Spanish Crown took action to safeguard Louisiana against the English. The king authorized the immediate immigration of Spaniards from the peninsula and the Canary Islands, as well as French, Germans and Italians. (Hyland, 1978:6)

Apparently, the main export of the Canary Islands during the 18th century was human beings. Like Ireland in the early 19th century and Sicily in the latter 19th century, the Canary Islands sent its sons and daughters to the overseas territories of Spain and other European nations. In the 18th century, mercantile orders for the Canarians demanded that for every one hundred tons of merchandise that the islands exported, five familes from there should emigrate to American lands. "After 1718, the Crown 'asked' that 50 families annually should abandon their homes and reside in the Indies." (Tornero, 1980:378, 379)

A Royal Order published on August 15, 1777 informed Matias de Galvez that he was to recruit people to complete the Louisiana Infantry Battalion and form a second one. Seven hundred healthy recruits were requested between the ages of 17-35. A preference was given to married men with wives and children. In time, these recruits would be given land, tools, and a stipend. They were not military recruits in the strict sense of the word, rather, they were soldier-settlers. With such an undertaking it was thought that two problems would be solved at once. The military garrison of Louisiana would be reinforced and a devoted population would be brought to the Spanish

province. "People promptly thronged to the enlistment centers." (Tornero, 1980: 379)

Of 2,010 emigrants to Louisiana, 600 were armed men who brought with them 444 families. On an average, the families were composed of four people, apart from the soldier-settlers. The pioneers came from three of the Canary Islands: 1,203 from Tenerife, 789 from Gran Canaria, and 18 from Lanzarote. (Tornero, 1980:381, 384)

The economy of the Canary Islands was extremely depressed during this period and for that reason, Matías de Gálvez, father of Bernardo and governor of the Canary Islands, had little difficulty in recruiting people for the voyage to Louisiana. On July 26, 1778, the Santisimo Sacramento, first of eight known vessels, sailed for Louisiana under command of Benito Ripoll y Barceló with two hundred and forty-two passengers. (Hyland, 1978:6-7)

The Santisimo Sacramento arrived in New Orleans early in 1779. After their arrival, the Islenos were settled in four locations or poblaciones. Only San Bernardo or Tierra de Bueyes (Terre-aux-Boeufs), as originally called by the Spaniards, succeeded.

Galvez wished to place a group of settlers near New Orleans. Consequently, he approached the wealthy landowner, Pierre Phillippe de Marigny, a marital connection of his wife, Felicité de Saint Maxent. De Marigny acceded to the governor's wishes and donated his large plantation below the city to King Carlos III of Spain, "for that purpose of colonization in which his Excellancy, Governor de Galvez, is most interested." Marigny was appointed the first commandant of the St. Bernard Post on February 17, 1780 and for the following twelve years he directed every phase of St. Bernard's development. He supervised the erection of homes for the colonists, the building of the first church in 1787, and the creation of the militia regiment named

"The Volunteers of the Mississippi" in 1792. (Hyland, 1978:7-8)

Thus, a marsh-bordered fertile ridge sparsely settled by early French planters was occupied by Spanish farmer-soldiers and their families. In a short time this empty land would become more valuable. Antonio Mendez first made sugar in Louisiana in 1791. In 1795, Etienne de Bore got cane from Mendez and hired Morin, a sugar maker from Cuba, and made sugar on a commercial scale. (Hansen, 1940) The granulation of sugar which was first demonstrated in St. Bernard in the early 1790s, revolutionized the economy and made it possible for large fortunes to be accumulated if an entrepreneur had land and capital enough to create a slave-operated plantation which would have access to cheap transportation such as river frontage or road. Apparently some Islenos managed to adapt to this new and profitable enterprise. The records of the late 18th century provide lists of the leading settlers and planters of St. Bernard. Among the French and Anglo-Saxon names, we begin to see surnames such as Nunez, Estopinal, Gutierrez, Hernández, Marrero, Sánchez, López, and Queridas. (Fortier, et al, 1892:197) A late 18th century observer noted that the Canary Islanders' "new settlement transplanted there around 1783, languished a long time under the illusory benefits which the government gave them but now under better circumstances provides food for the city and makes sugar at Terre-aux-Boeufs." (Pitot, 1979:101)

A process took place in St. Bernard which apparently occurred all over the southern tier of Louisiana Parishes. T. Lynn Smith generalizes on this phenomenon.

> The earliest settlements in the area were along the main bayous where the natural levees were highest and broadest, and the front lands the best drained

> and widest. Agriculture, of course, was the chief occupation of the earliest settlers; as time went on, various swamp products such as lumber, moss, fish, furs, frogs, turtles, alligators, etc., became important from a commercial as well as a domestic standpoint. There gradually took place a differentiation of the population into distinct groups. Part of the families remained on the front lands and spent practically all of their time in agricultural pursuits. Others took up their abode in the swamps, gaining their livelihoods from the various swamp products; with the exception of some lumbering, this developed very largely into a collecting economy.
>
> Professional men in the area who have been interested in the process of differentiation taking place before their eyes are convinced that some important selective factors have been at work. According to them, the process has operated as follows: those persons from the front lands who have been least successful in meeting competition, on the one hand, and most dissatisfied under the restraints imposed by civilization, on the other, have tended to push back farther and farther into the swamps. . .
>
> (Smith, 1937:66 in Kammer, 1941:9)

With a slight amendment, i.e., substitution of marsh and Gulf of Mexico for swamps, this statment applies to the process of economic differentiation that took place in St. Bernard Parish. It is also similar to adaptive processes that were occuring up the river from New Orleans where other Islenos were located. Hawley has done a study of the folk medicine of the brulee dwellers of Ascension Parish. As in St. Bernard, the Spanish were the first Europeans to settle extensively the Bayou Lafourche area in the late 1770s. The Islenos of Ascension Parish were at first also settled along the fertile natural levees of the river and bayou. Initially they constituted a stable class of soldier-farmers. After the arrival of the Acadians and Anglo-Americans, they proved unable to adapt to the new economic order. "The ascendance of sugar-cane monoculture and the Anglo-French planter class drove the Spanish from the choice land on the levees into the vacant backswamp. With similarly dispossessed Acadian families they burned off the vegetation to clear the land (Fr. - bruler) There they lived off the land while seasonally employed

by the sugar plantations." (Hawley, 1976:1-2) The folk migration from the bayous to the swamps occurred between 1820 and 1860 in the Ascension Parish region. The reasons for such a move have been analyzed by Comeaux:

> First, they could not afford to build and maintain the levees and roads as required by law for all front holders. Second, they feared debt, and once in debt they sold their land. And third, these poor, independent Acadians (and Spaniards) were considered to be a poor influence on the plantation slaves, and plantation owners were willing to buy their frontage at almost any price. The main result of the agressiveness of the Anglo-Americans was the abandonment of such areas as the upper Bayou Lafourche by small independent farmers and their replacement by large sugar producing plantations employing Negro labor.
>
> (Comeaux, 1972:11 in Hawley, 1976:22)

In the case of the St. Bernard Islenos, not all moved into the marshland. Some became members of the planter class, Creolized, as it were. Today, there exists in the minds of the water Islenos, who are the subject of this report, a social distinction between themselves and those Islenos who stayed "on the bank".

An Act of Congress in 1832 confirmed the Spanish Grants of the Terre-aux-Boeufs area. This document and map implies that there was a slow process of absorption and interaction with French families in the area. For example, holdings like those of: E. Marin, J. Wogan, Jean Baptiste Bourg, Cyprien Lefebvre, Eugene Charles Dumochel, Etienne Viellon, Pierre Thomas, Balthazar Livaudais, Francis Carle, Nicholas DeJean, Laurent Milleaudon, Martial St. Germain, the Bienvenu brothers, P. Reaud and the Olivier brothers, and others with non-Iberian surnames are settled side-by-side with Islenos such as the following who were settled in Terre-aux-Boeufs in 1779: Marrero, Nunez, Hernandez, Alfonso, Perrera and Torres. (Congressional Record, June 23, 1832:498-501)

A correspondent for the Weekly Picayune wrote an article about the Islenos on October 22, 1838. The author wanted to present "a few facts respecting a little colony of long standing, before all their distinguishing marks are lost in the overwhelming tide of improvement, innovation, and all kinds of Americanisms." The author described the French Market and the Islenos' trips into town to sell their produce of sweet potatoes and onions. They travelled to and from St. Bernard in oxen-drawn carts. All of them were from Terre-aux-Boeufs and they were still known as Islenos sixty years after their immigration. The anonymous writer assures the reader that although some have inferred that the Islenos are of "Gipsey" descent, this is not true "for they are too good and useful a kind of population to trace their origin to an ancestry of such vagabonds." The writer verifies such generalizations as those made above by Smith and Comeaux in stating that the Islenos live on a strip of dry land with a few wealthy planters who were slowly encroaching and buying out the small properties. They were also workers for these planters as well as hunters and fishermen for the New Orleans market. They were renowned for their skills in training oxen. People from all over the state sent their oxen to the Islenos to be trained. (This skill was retained well into the twentieth century.) "Terre-aux-Boeufs is a nursery for oxen." The writer described a typical family excursion from St. Bernard on the levees for the sale of their produce. After selling their crops they would go to some wholesale grocer "who is generally some wealthy Spaniard well acquainted with their ways." The observer noted their deference to the aged, the "patriarchial state" of their social relations and the "intimacy among themselves alone". These traits have been noted by later writers, including this one. They are also noted for their generosity. He described the killing of a beef and the distribution among the neighbors "and thus are the best feelings of the human heart cultivated

by the singular customs of this community." (Pritchard, 1941:35-38.)

The 1850 census of St. Bernard Parish is a demographic benchmark that supports the economic differentiation process hypotheses stated by Smith and Comeaux. Out of a total of 283 dwellings in the parish, there are 51 in which there are people who were born in Spain or a Spanish-speaking country such as Cuba or Mexico. There are a total of 83 people born in Hispanic countries broken down as follows: 63 born in Spain, 7 from the Canary Islands, 1 from Portugal, 7 from Cuba, 5 from Mexico. Occupations of Spanish males noted are: 7 laborers, 7 farmers, 24 fishermen, 5 barkeepers, 10 coffee house keepers, 3 cooks, 1 carpenter, 1 physician, 1 chairmaker, 1 breadmaker, 1 gardener. Already the ratio of tiller of the soil to collector is 7 to 24. Of the people who list their occupations as either fisherman (50) or hunter (8), virtually all are of Spanish origin. One fisherman is from Denmark, two from Germany, one from Sweden, one from France, one from England, one from Connecticut and one from Pennsylvania. The information in this census suggests that Hispanism was being reinforced in St. Bernard in the mid-19th century and the ecological niche of the marsh was being further occupied and developed if the numbers of hunters and fishermen are any indication. The degree of Hispanism is also indicated by the number of people on the rolls who have Spanish surnames. I counted 617 people whose names are recognizably Spanish. In several cases I was unable to read the name and did not count anything that was ambiguous. The total of free people in the parish at that time was 1,438. Thus over 45% of the non-slave population was of Spanish descent. The Iberian character of St. Bernard Parish was already established.

A native of St. Bernard, General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, ordered the bombardment of Fort Sumpter which began the Civil War in April 1861. There was very little fighting except skirmishing that occurred in the

parish, however, it did suffer from the conscription and economic breakdown of the war years and the Reconstruction that followed. The collapse of the confederacy correlated with the collapse of the plantation system in St. Bernard. Only the Poydras plantation survived the war intact. (Kaltenbaugh, 1970:9-10)

The philologist, folklorist and historian, Alcee Fortier, has left us with a view of Isleno life at Delacroix Island toward the end of the 19th century. In 1891 he made two trips to St. Bernard Parish to gather information on Isleno life and language. His first visit was in June. He began his trip on the New Orleans and Shell Beach Railroad which ended on an above-water turnaround in Lake Borgne. Fortier left the train at St. Bernard Station. He notes a degree of stratification that had evolved.

> The descendants of the Canary Islanders are known in Louisiana as les Islingues. The principal families are the Estopinal, Nunez, Serpas, Ojeda, Guerra, Gonzales, Gutierrez and Guajiro. There is also the Puig (Puch) family, which is Catalan, but descended from the Ojedas. A number of these people are men of education and wealth; the senator from St. Bernard Parish is an Estopinal and the sheriff is a Nunez. The great majority, however, as with the descendants of the Acadians, are poor and ignorant. They cultivate their little patch of ground and raise vegetables, chiefly potatoes and onions. They are also great hunters. They all speak Spanish, but a few speak the Creole patois and the younger ones speak English.

Fortier recorded a conversation with an old woman to illustrate the type of Spanish spoken. She answered his questions about the birthplace of her parents.

---Islenos.

---Como Islenos? De que isla?

---Yo no se. Islenos -- es todo lo que se.

Islanders.

How Islanders? From what island?

I do not know. Islanders, that is all I know.

Apparently on this first visit, Fortier did not go far from the St. Bernard station. On his second visit in November of the same year, he and Mr. Ben Olivier went to l'Ile (Delacroix Island) "where live those descendants of the Spaniards, who are yet children of nature."

> La Terre-aux-Boeufs is a narrow strip of fertile land about ten miles from the Mississippi River. On the right is Lake Lery and on the left Lake Borgne. As we advanced towards the Gulf, the strip of land grew narrower, and after a ride of a few miles we could see on both sides of us the trembling prairie. As we rode along we passed a number of small farms where nothing was cultivated but the onion, and every person we met spoke Spanish. To Mr. Olivier's greeting, i como esta, paisano? a courteous reply in Spanish was given by men and boys.

According to Fortier, in those days a dense oak forest covered most of the land between Reggio and the Island. Very little of that remains today. He described the Island as follows:

> The dwellings are on both sides of the bayou, and are mostly palmetto huts. As it was a cold day nearly all the men had gone hunting and fishing, and the women were indoors; a few children, however, dark-haired and brown, were running about in the cold wind, bareheaded and barefooted, and a young man in a canoe was crossing the bayou in the direction of a hut . . .
>
> The Spaniards on l'Ile live entirely by hunting and fishing. The women fish in the bayou in front of their huts, but the men go to the Gulf for fishing and to the lakes for hunting. They bring back immense quantities of fish and ducks, which are sent to the Olivier railroad station, ten or twelve miles distant, in small carts drawn by oxen, yoked Spanish fashion, by the horns. The land does not belong to the Islenos; they build their huts and pay one dollar a month for the rent of the land. The palmetto huts struck me with amazement--how could human beings in a civilized country lieve in such dwellings! There is no chimney, and the fire is made in the hut on a few bricks, the smoke escaping through an opening in the roof.

The elegant Creole, appalled by such rusticity, then visited "old Pepe Martin". Mrs. Martin stayed in the background while Fortier and Olivier

conversed with the Delacroix resident. Such feminine reticence prodded him to remark: "We were really with the children of nature, where man is supreme and woman is nothing but an obedient being." Pepe told Fortier that no one on the Island could read or write in the population of about three hundred. Although Fortier pitied their hardship and deprivation . . .

> They seemed, however, perfectly contented; they were very poor, but the palmetto hut was warm, the hunting and fishing furnished food, the mother and children were in good health, the father was strong and jovial. . . The Islenos are a pure race . . . and marry among themselves. Both boys and girls marry from the age of fifteen, said old Pepe, and there were many children in each family.
>
> (Fortier, 1894:199-209)

Several points of information (and misinformation) are revealed here that pertain to my observations and analysis. Some of them will be treated at greater length farther along in this report.

1) Fortier spells Nunez with the tilde implying that it would be pronounced as in standard Spanish. To my knowledge this no longer occurs. Isleño names are pronounced, even by Spanish speakers, as if creolization of French and English phonology had occurred. Instead of Nunyez the name would be pronounced Noonez.

2) Fortier states that there is a Catalan strain among the Islenos and later speaks about their being a "pure race". Heterogeniety of origins was and is more extensive than he leads us to believe. By "pure race" he means that the Islenos do not intermarry with Negroes, not that they are exclusively of Canarian ancestry.

3) He mentions a degree of stratification and economic differentiation -- upper-class gentry and lower classes of small farmers and fishermen/hunters. This affirms prior and subsequent observations.

4. Spanish identity is strongly marked since all speak Spanish.

5) We should not be led to believe that Islenos were ignorant of their origins since the old woman does not know from what Islands her ancestry derives. Fortier does state that the old woman was somewhat addled. At the time of his visit to Delacroix Island there were recent migrants from the Canary Islands as well as descendants of the original Canarian migration residing there according to some of my older informants.

6) There has been considerable change in the environment since Fortier's day as mentioned in the preceding chapter. Fortier left the train about where the intersection of Highways 46 and 300 is today. He notes a considerable amount of small farming. This no longer continues. There has also been a great degree of loss of forested land.

7) The human landscape has also changed. Today Delacroix Island residences are almost exclusively situated along the highway side of the Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. Palmetto huts no longer can be seen although some of my informants remember them well. Currently, Delacroix is composed of about 165 houses and trailers. The houses are neat, in some cases, rather grand homes. Most of them date post-1965 when Hurricane Betsy destroyed most of the structures there. What does set the architecture of lower St. Bernard Parish apart from most recent urban and suburban residential architecture is that there are relatively few homes built directly upon concrete slabs. Almost all of the homes are raised on pilings or chain walls anywhere from three to twelve feet from the surface of the land. Since all of the lower parish is flood-prone, these are appropriate precautions.

8) There is mention of the division of labor -- the men are off hunting and fishing while the women are indoors or fishing nearby the home in the bayou. There is also implicit an awareness of male space, the Gulf and marshes, and female space, home and its vicinity.

9) Today the Islenos as a rule own their own homes as well as water frontage and dock space.

10) Oxen were the major link between the Island and the railroad which carried their ducks and fish to the market in New Orleans. Transportaion has changed. Today there are paved roads to Yscloskey and Delacroix. The railroad no longer exists but most families are prosperous enough to have at least one automobile or truck.

11) Fortier implies a rural ruggedness possessed by the Islenos. They cheerfully endured physical hardship. I will elaborate upon this in another chapter, but suffice it to state here that this observation still applies.

12) I believe that his observation about female deference to males, at least in the presence of outsiders, might still apply to older couples.

13) Illiteracy is no longer the rule. Islenos have been able to avail themselves of public education since at least the 1920s. However, full time attendance at school during the trapping season is probably only common from the 1950s. Even today, except perhaps for a few old residents born in Spain, none of the Islanders are literate in Spanish.

14) Islenos marry later and have fewer children than was the case in Fortier's time.

15) Fortier twice uses the term "children of nature" in his passage. I believe that this is a misleading statement. I will deal with this in the next chapter.

From the Civil War through the 1940s the population of St. Bernard was essentially rural. The population of 1940 was 7,286, scarcely doubled in the previous 100 years. However, during the post-World War II years, the parish's residents increased dramatically as St. Bernard became a bedroom

community for New Orleans. Today, the population is over 64,000. From the parish line at Arabi to Violet, almost uninterrupted residential and commercial development is the rule. Yet, the lower end of the parish is still pretty much as it was when I first saw it in the early 1940s. The community of Shell Beach has become a casualty to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, but Yscloskey, Reggio and Delacroix Island are still hanging on as their residents persist in following the life of fishermen and trappers.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

A quartrain recited to my colleague Samuel G. Armistead and me by Joseph Chelito Campo of Delacroix Island lists the traditional occupations of the Islenos:

> Los Torneros son jardineros
> En Reggio los trampadores
> En Shell Beach los pescadores
> En la Isla los cazadores.
>
> The people at the Turn are gardeners
> At Reggio are the trappers
> At Shell Beach the fishermen
> At the Island the hunters.

Like much folk creativity, this is an oversimplification. The people who remained farmers also hunted and probably did a little fishing and trapping. The residents of Reggio, Shell Beach and Delacroix probably always participated in all of the listed occupations although their farming tended to be more on the order of kitchen gardens. The poem does, however, present an accurate picture of a basic separation betweeb the Torneros as farmers and the remainder of the Islenos who concentrated upon profiting from the abundant wild life of southern Louisiana. These were the people Fortier characterized as "children of nature". This was probably an appealing term to the professor of Romance languages. It summons images of simplicity, isolation from the real world, and perhaps an overemphasized detachment from economic reality. Today, in anthropological literature, the hunter-gatherer-fisherman is often presented as living in a paradisal stage of human cultural evolution. Turnbull's The Forest People, a study of the pygmies of the Ituri Forest of Zaire, gives us an example of this type of writing. Lee's work on the Bushmen of the Kalahari presents a more economy-based study, but still a rather "best of all possible worlds" is implied in that the Bushmen are pictured to a large

extent living in an environment of abundance, to the exploitation of which their cultural skills are crucial. What Fortier forgot was some of his data. When "children of nature" have to rely upon the vagaries of the New Orleans market for their sustenance beyond what they can produce themselves; when they depend on the technology of the industrial world, even in Fortier's day; then they cannot be considered to be living in an Eden-like and illusory primordial world.

Certainly there were elements of subsistence occupations among the Islenos in the past and there still are today. However, it would be misleading to classify them as subsistence hunter-collector-fisherman-trappers and let this suffice to describe their economic life. The majority of Islenos who live at Delacroix and Yscloskey are entrepreneurs and I suspect that they always were. They left the land because of economic forces and initially made what seemed to be a rational choice between harvesting wild life or committing themselves to a horticultural or agricultural way of life. Nevertheless, there is an aspect of sport mingled with their entrepreneurship. Trapping is an economic enterprise which entails complex elements of personal skills acquired from elders, land tenure, marketing, and fluctuating of the fur animal population. All of these components play a part in the potential profitability of their fur harvesting. However, it is also something of a sport. It is challenging to outwit the muskrat, nutria, or otter. The same element of sport and gamble applies to various kinds of fishing and certainly market hunting for ducks in bygone days. Isleno commercial fishermen go sport fishing on their days off! So the rewards of the water-Islenos are more than monetary.

In this chapter, I discuss the major occupations of the Islenos. They are: trapping, fishing, shrimping, oystering, and crabbing. In the past, moss picking and market hunting for ducks were important sources of income.

Although duck hunting is no longer productive insofar as monetary gain is concerned, I argue that it still looms large as a symbol-laden pastime which has expressive and mythological inferences.

Presently, as in the past, Islenos also derive income from other occupations such as working in shipyards and factories, working for oil companies, both as production employees and as boat crews and captains, machinists, mechanics, hunting and fishing guides, and in various parish, state and federal civil service occupations. In brief, the occupational choices open to them are pretty much the same as those of the wider society. People who follow these non-traditional occupations may still follow marsh and water occupations on a part-time basis. Also,people retired from non-traditional occupations might supplement their pensions by some activity in traditional occupations. Before discussing traditional occupations, I believe that it will be appropriate to mention one source of income which is non-traditional but which has had an effect upon fishing and trapping.

THE OIL INDUSTRY

The petroleum industry is a mixed blessing to the Islenos and other residents of southern Louisiana. It provides royalties and employment but it is also held responsible for polluting the environment and threatening the traditional occupations that Islenos have pursued for decades. In one sense the employment provided by oil companies and other industries makes it possible for traditional occupations to persist. If some individuals had to depend solely upon fishing or trapping they would be placed in dire financial straits. As it is, some can partially or wholly withdraw from the ecosystem to permit a relatively small number of full-time fisherman to continue their livelihoods.

Such comments as the following are typical.

> The oil companies for the last 10 or 15 years, nobody could control them. They could do whatever they pleased. They made no provisions for waste oil. They just let it spread out through the marsh. They would burn it and when the water came up it would spread all over the place. I can show you places where the marsh is ruined. Now with the enironmental controls trying to check the oil companies, the fur industry is making a comeback. The crabs were down real bad in the last three years. Now crabs are beginning to show signs of coming back. There are more now than there were four or five years ago. You begin to see the feed for the rats coming back too. Waste oil killed plant life, fish and rats.

When I asked the above-quoted informant, a 58-year-old former resident of the Island, whether it was possible to side with the oil companies since the industry provided jobs for so many, he answered:

> No. People feel that the fur industry was the main industry and they wanted to preserve it. But you had a controversy here with the oil companies. They were putting their own people on the conservation commission statewide. When you went and complained to them, they would come and investigate and give you all kinds of excuses but they would never report it.
>
> Me and (his wife) reported a big oil spill. We tried and tried to call environmental controls. Finally an agent called and just about insulted my wife. Finally I took him out and rubbed his nose in the oil. I raised hell all the way out and all the way in. It turned out that this man working for the environmental controls was a retired oil company man. He had worked for them all his life and favored the oil companies.

Another complaint against the oil companies is that their canal digging is a factor in the erosion of the marsh. Pipelines and other underwater equipment are detrimental to shrimping and fishing. Trawls are often ruined when they are snagged on underwater obstructions placed by the oil companies.

Marsh buggies used in exploration are often cited as harmful to the ecosystem. Such vehicles pack down the marsh and kill grass and rats which are underground. Anti-marsh buggy sentiment is similar to anti-snowmobile

feelings in northern parts of the country. Isleños feel that marsh buggies are just as ruinous to the marsh. Certainly, landowners are happy to have money coming in from oil leases and royalties. Yet they want to preserve the environment. They seem farsighted in this. Their people have adapted to the marsh for over two hundred years. An oil well can be pumped dry in a decade or two.

CRABBING

Crabbing provides a supplemental source of income. Today, crabs are taken in baited traps made of heavy wire coated with preservative. In the past they were also taken on trotlines and with circular crab nets picked up by boatmen. The decima recorded on page 132 communicates the plight of the crab fisherman. A variant of this song ends each verse with a mournfully sung "Maldita el mes de Febrero" or "Maldita sea el mes de Febrero" -- Cursed be the month of February -- pertaining to the most miserable weather of the year. One saying has it that insofar as weather is concerned, "Febrero es loco, marzo un poco" -- February is crazy and March a little (crazy). In other words, crabbing is something of an occupation of last resort for many. It is something to fall back on if there are no rats, or formerly, if there were no ducks. Fishing and shrimping are also more profitable and not as strenuous.

One old-time method of crabbing called papaera was to hang a seine or trammel net on poles at the mouth of a bayou. With each tidal change the crabber would pick up the net and remove the crabs that became hung up on it. He would then separate them into categories of "hard", those which had attained full growth and ceased shedding, and those which were about to shed. He would

clip the claws of the latter category and place them into floating, lathed, "crab boxes" which he would check every few hours. Those that had shed would be removed and placed on beds of moss in a large refrigerator. Every few days a buyer would come to purchase his soft and hard crabs for boiling.

I observed this type of operation when I was a child accompanying my father on fishing trips to a marina on Dollut Canal, a bayou that empties into Lake Borgne, a few miles east of Shell Beach. Such total control of the soft shell crab operation from catch to selling of the crabs is unusual today. There is usually a degree of specialization regarding crabs among the Islenos. That is, some people catch them and sell them to others who place them in boxes for the shedding process. This is the type of enterprise that older people can pursue. There is a gamble involved, however. Crabs are usually purchased by the hamper. A buyer takes his chances on the amount of "hard" or unsheddable crabs that are in the basket.

Older people sometimes supplement their incomes by catching and picking crabs and selling the meat.

OYSTERS

Oysters are a cultivated crop. Bottoms are either leased or owned. After oyster bottoms are prepared, the oysters are allowed to develop for one or two years. Then they can be dredged and transported to a brinier location to acquire a saltier taste.

The dredging operation is strenuous and demands coordination and stamina. In December of 1980, I observed Mr. Louis Molero, Jr. and his son dredge from their boat, the "Captain Jim". The captain has a considerable amount of machinery to operate. He is able to control the boat from one of

three different wheels, one inside the cabin, one outside the cabin, and one forward near the winches that operate the dredges. Thus the captain can always be near to a wheel while he is dredging. There are two dredges on each side of the boat. Near each dredge is a picking table. The crew member's position is at one of the picking tables. The dredge is attached to a rake, a large metal basket-tongs with chain-webbing. The depth must be carefully determined and the dredge must be angled properly in order to pick up the oysters from the bottom. After a drag, the dredge is hauled in and dumped on the picking table where the picker cleans the oysters, that is, he throws away empty shells over the side and throws the oysters into a bin in the middle of the deck forward of the cabin. Then he throws the dredge over the side and goes over to the other side of the boat where the other dredge is picked up and the haul picked over. While one dredge is being dragged on the bottom, the crew member is working on the haul from the rake on the other side. It is continuous work. When the crew member is not dredging and cleaning the haul he is sacking the oysters. He places a bushel basket without a bottom in a sack and then shovels the basket full. Then the basket measure is pulled out and the sack is tied. He also carries the sacks to the hold where they are stowed. It is heavy, non-stop work.

The "Captain Jim" sleeps two. It has a head with a bath, sink and stove. The engine burns 60 gallons of fuel per day when shrimping, 20 gallons of fuel per day when oystering. It is 17 and 1/2 feet wide and 45 feet long, drawing 30 inches of water, all-steel construction, powered by a GM 671 165hp engine. It represents an investment of at least $100,000.00.

Not all rigs are so plush. There is room for the small entrepreneur in all of these enterprises. Fishing and shrimping can be done from much

smaller boats. An example of a much less expensive craft is that of Mr. Kenny Campo, the Justice of the Peace of Yscloskey. He designed this boat himself and it resembles a World War II landing craft. It is aluminum, seven feet wide at the waterline, flaring out to nine feet at the gunwales. Its length is not much more than its width, about twelve feet. On it he has installed a small metal picking table and a little dredge powered by a 5-HP engine. The 85-HP engine that drives the vessel is an outboard. One man can operate the craft and go just about anywhere with it. Mr. Campo had it built to his specifications at Tim's in Violet. He told me that the builder thought that such an unconventional craft was crazy but while the completed boat was still at the boatyard, two other people ordered similar craft to be custom-built for them. Here is an example of an invention becoming rapidly diffused. I suspect that any aid to livelihood follows the same pattern of either adaption or invention by a member of the community. After a communal assessment of its efficiency, it is quickly copied by others.

FISHING

Under this category, I include shrimping. The estuaries, bays and adjacent waters of the Gulf of Mexico provided southern Louisiana with an abundance of fish and crustaceans. Shrimping with the otter trawl is divided into two consecutive seasons. The first is for brown shrimp and begins at a date set by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries usually

about mid-May. This season runs until the end of July. The second season for white shrimp begins sometime in August and continues into the fall and winter months. If the shrimping is unsuccessful, there are varieties of fishing that the Isleno can fall back on. Shark fishing using trot lines or trammel nets is a relatively new source of income in the summer months.

Such marketable species as speckled trout, redfish, sheepshead, and flounder can be a side-product of shrimp drags as well as objects of specialized fishing. Bait fishing for minnows is also a way of filling in the gaps in the annual cycle of harvesting of marine life. (See end of this chapter for a diagram of the annual cycle.) Inside waters are fished in the winter months when these species tend to form schools in the cooler weather. In March there is a movement of fishing concentration to the outside waters of the Gulf. ("Inside" and "outside" are folk categories which pertain to estuarine-marsh and Gulf waters respectively.)

There is a fascinating bit of lore that implies a semi-domestication in fishing. Islenos, when finding smaller fish in their nets, would carry them in buckets to "blind" (landlocked) ponds in the marsh. There they would grow to enormous size within a year or so. Then they would be fished out. One old-timer told me: "In the old days, we took care of the fish". Many of the prize-winning fish caught in fishing rodeos came from these ponds. This type of enterprise is, however, something of a gamble. In times of excessively high water, the fish might be able to swim out over the marsh to open water.

ALLIGATOR HUNTING

This is an old occupation which declined when trapping and other more profitable pursuits developed but is now undergoing something of a revival. The alligator had for decades been considered an endangered species.

Today, tags or licenses are sold to hunters in south Louisiana who then fill their quotas in September and October. One Delacroix resident told me that the state should permit people to kill more alligators. He stated, "I don't like to see any animal become extinct, but the only place you should be able to see an alligator is in a zoo." Folk belief has it that these animals cause erosion with their wallows and burrows and that they are a menace to wildlife such as ducks and muskrats.

A favorite method of taking alligators is by hook and line. After ascertaining the general territory of an alligator, the hunter will bait a heavy hook tied to a strong line. This will be hung about one foot over the surface of the water. The alligator, if attracted to the bait, will lunge out of the water and hook himself. The hunter will check his baits each day or several times a day. If he discovers an alligator on the line, he will shoot it with a .22 rifle.

TRAPPING

The Islenos, like other marsh dwellers of southern Louisiana, profit from trapping. They are adjacent to some of the most productive fur marshes in North America and since the turn of the century they have directed much of their energies toward trapping muskrat, otter, mink and, most recently, nutria. Most of my material in this regard is taken from Lowery whose observations and analysis seem borne out by my own investigations in the Isleno area.

Louisiana is the leading fur-producing area on the North American continent. In some winters, the number of pelts "has far exceeded the combined total for all the provinces of Canada and Alaska." (Lowery, 1974:21) Almost

from the founding of Louisiana, New Orleans had been a major fur center because of its position as a shipping center for the European trade. However, these furs were harvested in the upper reaches of the Mississippi valley and sent down to New Orleans for trans-shipment to Europe. Louisiana was not a major fur-producing area until recent times.

The history of the muskrat before 1900 is rather patchy. Lowery agrees with O'Neil "that isolated colonies persisted all along but were so limited by the lack of suitable food supply and by the abundance of predators that they went unobserved by early inhabitants or explorers who studied the coastal marshes." (O'Neil in Lowery, 1974:25)

In the 19th century, alligator hunting and trapping of minks, otters and raccoons was a source of cash for marsh dwellers. As alligators became scarcer, the marsh inhabitants found that they could facilitate poling them from their holes by firing the vegetation. This burning created deeper peat marshes and promoted a lush growth of the subclimax plant, three-cornered sedge, which is the preferred food of muskrats. A muskrat population explosion followed. (Lowery, 1974:25)

Between 1900 and 1910, the first serious trapping of muskrat began in Louisiana with the trappers getting from 5¢ to 10¢ per pelt. Until that time, the major fur market was the Old World. Few Americans owned furs. After 1900, the situation altered. Easily accessible northern fur-producing areas became exhausted as American women began to wear furs. The muskrat coat came into vogue "as a lower-priced article within the range of thousands of housewives and working girls." Muskrat prices rose each year and demand increased. A trapping boom occurred. By 1912, trapping was so important that the Louisiana legislature decreed a closed season on mink, otter, muskrat and raccoon. Licenses for trapping were required and a trapping season

from November 11 to February 1 was declared. (Lowery, 1974:25, 26)

There have been striking fluctuations in the muskrat harvest over the years. Muskrats are noted for their phenomenal breeding potential and their susceptability to disaster. Sometimes the two elements are interlinked. With lots of food, muskrat populations explode:

> The density soars to several individuals per acre, with more being rapidly produced. Soon the muskrats eat up all available vegetation, even digging down into the prairie floor as much as 20 inches to devour the root system that binds the marsh soil together. As a result, the earth disintegrates into loose mud with decaying plan remains floating in the ooze.
>
> (Lowery, 1974:27)

Such a denuded area is called an "eat out". At this point, the population declines. The sequence of low numbers of rats, development of the food supply due to human burning of the marsh, overpopulation, eat-out, is repeated over and over again every ten to fourteen years on the better three-cornered grass marshes and at longer intervals in areas with less favored vegetation such as paille fine or cattail. (Lowery, 1974:27) I have constructed the following graph from Lowery's figures. Instead of indicating annual catches of rats, I have taken peaks and troughs from statewide figures. For example, in 1919, there were nine and one-half million pelts recorded. The lowest year following that, was the 1924-1925 season with a half-million pelts. Although this graph indicates statewide fluctuations, we should note that the local fluctuations might be quite different from the state total. There is no set trough or peak for brackish marshes as a whole. Each area goes through its own ecological cycle. (Lowery, 1974:28)

Nutria were introduced into Louisiana marshes in 1938 through the escape of a few imported by E. A. McIlhenny from Argentina. With no natural predators (except humans), this animal's population zoomed. Trappers detested

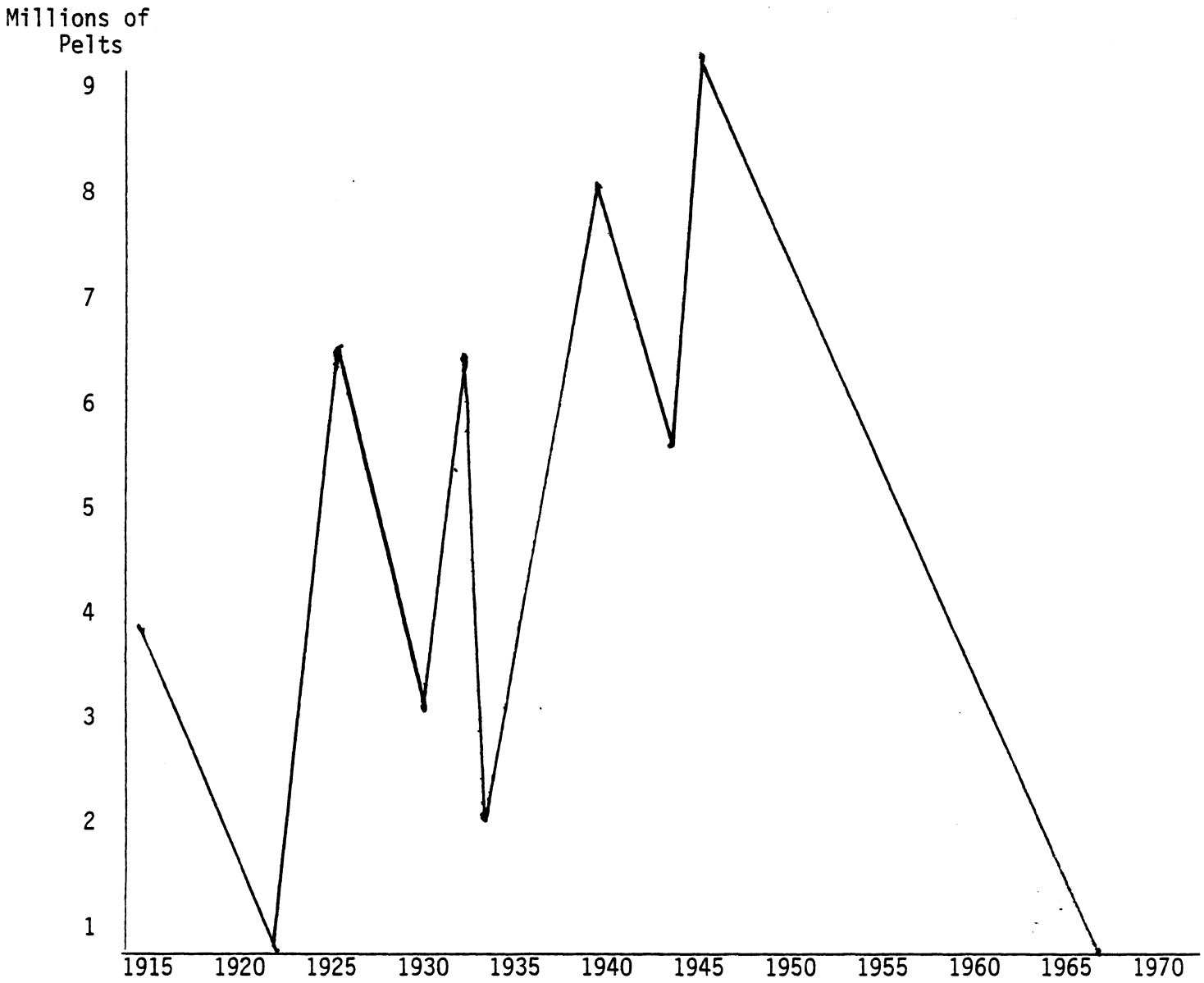

Figure 1.

Fluctuation of Muskrat Harvest in Louisiana

them since they saw that muskrats grew scarcer as the nutria abounded. However, hurricanes and the great freeze of 1962 helped to stablizie the nutria population as they drowned and froze by the millions. An idea of how nutria and muskrat interrelate can be gleaned from the following figures. In 1944, the first year that there was a market for nutria, 436 pelts were recorded. There were 4,743,790 muskrat pelts taken that year. In the 1972-73 season, there were 1,611,623 nutria taken contrasted with a greatly diminished take of 346,787 muskrats. (Lowery, 1974:28-45)

A Delacroix resident stated that he vividly remembers a "conservation" man giving the news to the population of St. Bernard Parish about nutria:

> They were driving around in a truck in which were some caged nutrias. They told the trappers, "We want to show you this animal that we are going to turn loose here. These nutrias are going to breed with the muskrats in the marsh and what you are going to end up with are bigger muskrats." Everybody just laughed at this.

Islenos see "nutras" as totally voracious animals:

> They will even eat duck blinds made of reeds. They will eat up the marsh. 'Everybody hates them. Now you can sell them for five to eight dollars a skin but this is recent. The old-timers all hated them.

The fluctuations of the fur market, with a general increase in price obtaining since the second decade of the 20th century, had an impact upon the human-land relationship in the marsh country of Louisiana. As among most collectors-hunters-fishermen, the Louisiana marsh dweller looked upon hunting, fishing and trapping grounds as free. There was no "private property" in the marsh at the turn of the century. Although land had nominal owners, there was generally no interference with the movements of trappers and hunters.

> Anyone who wanted to harvest fur simply bought himself some traps, sallied into any area where he thought fur-bearers might be found, set the traps, skinned his catch, and sold the pelts to the first visiting fur buyer.
> (Lowery, 1974:35)

When the price of fur rose, the owners of marsh property wanted their share. To get it, they either trapped their own property, or rented it at so much an acre to a trapper or to a leasing company, which in turn sublet it to a trapper. (Lowery, 1974:35) This infuriated the "free trapper" and he resisted attempts to deprive him of what he considered a God-given privilege. Hereupon, warfare broke out in the Louisiana marshes. (Lowery, 1974:35) The federal and state governments made arrests and ultimately the "free trappers" either bought their own land or leased it from someone else or from the State of Louisiana.

The fur boom affected the Islenos as it did other people in Louisiana. Kane has described the effect of the fur bonanza on Delacroix Island and the subsequent rival claims to ownership by interested parties. He noted the change that had taken place in the habitat over the previous few decades. The area had been struck by two major environmental changes: ground subsidence and salt water intrusion. People who had lived by the soil in early years had turned from it. Successive storms and floods had been too much:

> "It's no use," one Isleno told me. "What we plant one year, the water takes the next. I kept up till my field was wash' three times in a row. That was enough for me." By degrees the Islenos were falling into listless poverty such as their forefathers had not known. (Kane, 1944:173-74)

However, good fortune struck in the twenties. The Islenos were in the middle of a thickly endowed muskrat territory. Kane claims that they became trappers and "nothing else". I find this hard to believe. Would they have forsaken shrimping, fishing and hunting and concentrated on trapping for just three months of the year? My own view of their industry does not support this. Nevertheless, prosperity did come to Delacroix Island. An informant remembers this period. Apparently there was no end of consumer goods at the Island.

Automobiles, horses, better homes were all available to buy with the profits from trapping. There were also disasters in the 1920s. Two crevasses flooded trapping and residential lands. Homes were lost. By the mid-1920s the Islenos were committed to trapping on private property and had achieved a degree of prosperity that seemed to be above what they had experienced at any time in their rugged history.

Murphy and Steward have compared and contrasted change and acculturation among the Mundurucu Indians of Brazil and the Montagnais fur trappers of Canada. The Mundurucu were rubber tappers who collected latex from wild trees. Although these were pre-literates who came into contact with more advanced societies through their marketing, they do point out some processes which might apply to the Islenos. For example, neither group had trapping or tapping territory before intense interaction with marketing elements occurred. Both groups became oriented toward individual trade. The trapper maintained and transmitted rights "to a delimited hunting territory exploited only by his family." The main hypothesis generated by their study is:

> When the people of an unstratified society barter wild products found in extensive distribution and obtained through individual effort, the structure of the native culture will be destroyed, and the final culmination will be a culture-type characterized by individual families having delimited rights to marketable resources and linked to the larger nation through trading centers.
> (Murphy and Steward, 1954:259)

The Islenos were and to a large extent remain an unstratified society insofar as ideology is concerned. As to the structure of their culture being destroyed, certainly within the last forty years there have been great changes, but I seriously doubt whether the overall structure of their economic adaptation has been destroyed. Perhaps it is not fair to use the foregoing as comparison with the Islenos. They differed significantly from the New World indigenes.

They were certainly not primitive or "tribal" people. They voluntarily left Spain and in many cases abandoned the agricultural way of life because hunting, fishing, and later, trapping, were easier and more profitable. This is retained in the folk appreciation of the move to the marsh. Yet trapping did bring dramatic change to the Islenos. Land became private property and their newly generated wealth made their life more comfortable. As will be seen in the next chapter, a technological change in the improvement of boats eroded the Islenos' Hispanism and the "camping" life which had helped to sustain the Spainish language. Where the Islenos differ most from the Montaignais and the Mundurucu and other market-dependent quondam hunter-trapper-colletor groups, is that they had other things to fall back upon if trapping was unsuccessful. For example, older people remember that the muskrat population around Delacroix was wiped out in the crevasses of 1922 and 1927. It was necessary to bring in rats for breeding stock. Nevertheless there was market hunting for ducks to fill the economic gap and empty stomachs. A décima relates another alternative to an unsuccessful trapping season. A trapper laments that there are warm winds from the Gulf bringing high water. This is bad for trapping. The trapper comes in with nothing and his daughter cries and tells him that he is going to lose his trapping land if he does not pay his note. The trapper tells her not to worry. He is going to see his cousin who is in business to ask him for credit that he can repay the next year. He says, "If we do not make it trapping, we will go fish for buffalo fish. If we do not make it fishing, we will go crabbing."

Essentially, the trapping round proceeded along these lines. As soon as the weather was cold enough and the grass brown and dry, the trapper would burn the grass. This makes walking the marsh easier, does not harm either the rats (they can take shelter in underground burrows) or the three-

cornered grass since as long as the roots are unharmed it will regenerate itself, providing new, tender shoots for the rats to eat. A week or two after the firing, the blackened marsh begins to be covered with bright spikes of young three-cornered grass. Thus the trapper provides sustenance for the muskrat. In this sense, the rats are semi-domesticated in that they live in a symbiotic relationship with humans. In order for humans to trap them, they have to feed them. To prevent "eat-out" from occurring, the rats must be trapped.

With the onset of the season, the trapper and his family would move to the marsh. They would inhabit a "camp", usually a cheap board house covered with tarpaper and set upon pilings. Kammer described this seasonal residence in 1941 when this practice was still current.

> During the trapping season, the whole family leaves home to spend the time at a camp far away in the marshes. These camps are either ramshackle huts or houseboats. If it is a hut, it is located on the bank of a bayou or lake to make it of easy access to fur buyers and the family's own boat which is used to procure supplies. The typical hut contains only two rooms, one of which combines all the features of a kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom. The other room is used as a bedroom. The whole family is crowded into these two rooms, which are small at best, while hung from the ceiling are row on row of skins stretched on frames to dry. A woodstove is used for both cooking and heating. Both beds and bunks are used for sleeping, with the children crowded three or four to a bed. A houseboat is merely a hut on a small barge. A slip for the boat is dug into the bank and it is tied to stakes driven into the ground.
>
> The family moves into their dwellings a week or two before the trapping season opens to get things in readiness. All take a hand in looking over the traps and the pelt stretchers, repairing them if necessary. When the season starts, each member of the family has an appointed task. The husband and the boys set out traps and then run the lines. Even the very small boys run a trap line of their own near the camp. When the day's catch is brought home, the women and girls skin the animals, run the skins through a clothes wringer to remove any bits of flesh

> and moisture that remains, and place the pelts on stretchers. While the men are away from the camp, the womenfolk keep the camp clean and prepare the meals. This routine is followed every day of the trapping season, being interrupted only by a trip back to the settlement to celebrate Christmas and a rare day off to buy supplies at the nearest store. To learn trapping lore, the younger boys go along with their father to see what signs to look for, where to set the traps, how to set the traps, etc. When the boy is old enough to take care of himself, he is allowed to run a trap line by himself. In the camp, the girls help the mother with the household tasks and are taught the proper way of skinning an animal, a most important lesson because a damaged skin will bring only a fraction of what it would otherwise be worth. When the boys become old enough they may be given a share of the season's catch, and in time -- usually between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one -- they become full partners with the father. This partnership oftentimes endures for life. The girls, however, are not so treated. They receive their food and clothing, and a little spending money on occasion: nothing more. To repeat, it is a man's world.
>
> (Kammer, 1941:36-37)

The above description is a generalization that applies to the four parishes that Kammer studied. Like all generalizations, it does not fit every variation on the theme. For example, some trappers never went into a settlement but had supplies brought to them by merchants. Frequently, this was a credit transaction which would be cleared up at the end of the season or when a batch of furs was sold. I have met at least one informant who did not take his family into the marsh but went alone. He returned every eight to ten days to visit them. I assume that the distance of the trapping ground to the family home was a variable which would help to determine whether the whole family would go out or not. A fifty-eight year old informant verified the statement about shares:

> My father always got my share of the trapping. I never got a share until the day I got married. Everything was given to the family. If there was anything left over -- if I wanted to go to a dance, if they felt that they could survive, if they had enough money, then they went ahead and gave me fifty cents or a dollar.

During the heyday of trapping, when large numbers of rats and decent prices coincided, trapping was a crucial factor in earning a living. If someone had a poor season, then the whole year would be, if not a loss, one of severely diminished income. Although there were other occupations to fall back upon, the largest single source of money was the fur industry.

Today Islenos recall the halcyon period of fur harvesting. A Delacroix resident told me:

> On a "lot" of ground (an 80-acre section) a person could take perhaps 6,000 rats in a season. Days in which a trapper would take 100 rats were not unusual. You actually had to trap this much because if you didn't the population would increase and they would just eat everything up. It was absolutely necessary to trap these animals to keep them from eating all the grass. Now it is more likely that you would take maybe 500 to 1,000 rats in a season.

Laws of supply and demand operate. In the best year, the 1946-47 season when 8,029,764 rats were taken, the approximate price paid for a pelt was $1.00. During the season of 1980-81, the price for a prime pelt was around $5.00. Given inflationary rise of living costs and operating expenses, today's trapper is correct when he says that he is working for less return.

MARKET HUNTING: THE DUCK AS RESOURCE AND SYMBOL

Hunting ducks for the New Orleans market had commercial utility and continues to have subsistence, recreational, and symbolic value for the Islenos. Most of the observations that follow pertain to the Delacroix Island area.

At the turn of the century before salt water had drastically eroded the Delacroix area, one could hunt without a boat or pirogue. All one had to do was walk behind one's house about a quarter of a mile or so to the edge of the marsh, make a blind, set out decoys, and quickly kill as many ducks as could be sold or were needed for food.

These early hunters used a variety of shotguns. Informants reported using or hearing about 4, 8, 10, 12, 16 or 20 gauge single or double barrel shotguns. The heavier bores would be fired from a sitting position at a flock of ducks on the water. To absorb the recoil of such cannons, the stocks would be hollowed and filled with lead. Chelito Campo recalls that ducks were so plentiful in those days that a single barrel gun was all that was needed. This gun really saved shells and prevented the crippling of ducks which could not be recovered. He stated that a hunter with a single barrel gun would be more likely to wait for the most opportune shot. A hunter with a double barrel might be tempted to squander shots at long range, knowing that he had a reserve shot.

Old-time market hunters always used more female decoys than male, usually in a ratio of eight to four. Apparently this was believed to approximate the ideal demography of duckdom. The best way of setting out decoys would be to float the females in a V formation with the apex pointing toward the shore. A clump of males would be thrown farther out. Ducks usually fly over water and the hunter would only shoot them over water. Shooting them over land increased the chances of losing game in the high, matted, marsh grass. "Then the only one who would be happy would be the 'coon who would eat the duck."

Setting out the decoys in the proper manner and getting the proper cover with grass and mung bushes is crucial to a successful hunt. Paying attention to wind direction is always important since it is imperative to prevent the duck from smelling the hunter. Consequently, a wind directly behind the hunter would not be suitable. A wind over either shoulder as one faces the water would be ideal. With the decoys set in a V facing the shore, one would want the wind blowing along one of the arms of the V. This arrangement could keep the hunter from being smelled by the ducks, especially by Grey Ducks and Teal which are believed to have acute senses of smell. Some of the old hunters would actually blind with the wind in their faces and put the decoys close to the opposite shore. This would only be appropriate on a small pond or inlet but better shots could be made on ducks from their rear as they flared prior to landing near the decoys.

Keeping the decoys clean was a necessity. They would always be washed to rid them of human scent. Some people rubbed them with mud. Very often, a market hunter, after shooting the first duck would pluck its feathers and spread them on the pond. This would permeate the area with the duck's smell and perhaps allay the fears of any subsequent ducks flying into the pond.

Mr. Campo stated that at the turn of the century people hunted as individuals. However, later, partnerships developed. Irvan Perez described one such case associated with a famous hunter, the best shot at the Island in the 1920s and 30s, Isidro Melerine. He would hunt for a group of people at a place called Lost Lake or Lacre Perdido. Four or five men would walk over the prairie to the landlocked lake. Melerine would shoot for all and the others would act as carriers, stringing the ducks around their necks in colies de patos or collars of ducks.

The 1922 and 1927 crevasses that flooded lower St. Bernard Parish killed most of the muskrat populations in those periods. Consequently, during those times, market hunting was more important than ever for securing cash during the winter.

Market hunting declined during the 1940s. A combination of more stringent enforcement of conservation laws and the decline of the duck population probably were important factors in this eclipse. Nevertheless, proximity to the marsh makes it possible for the Islenos to hunt every day during the season for their pleasure and subsistence. Today, ducks are important to the Isleño diet.

The market hunters killed what they could sell. Ordinarily they sold their ducks at the French Market in New Orleans. Some hunters established contacts with specific restaurants. Buyers were very selective. Usually only Mallards, Pintails, occasionally Grey Ducks and geese were bought. Only pairs consisting of one male and one female were purchased. The hunters received between 30¢ to 35¢ per pair. Shotgun shells sold for only 35¢ a box of twenty-five so there was little expense incurred. During most of this period the Islenos had no refrigeration available to them at the Island so ducks were gutted shortly after returning from the marsh or even in the field. Frequently the hunter kept the gizzards and livers of the marketed ducks for his own food.

The ducks and other marsh birds brought cash into the Isleno communities and they also brought and still bring food. Beginning in September, coots or poul d'eau and Blue Wing Teal fly into the Delacroix marshes. Subsequently, the larger winter ducks arrive in late October, November and December. With the Green Wing Teal arriving in late winter and early spring, there are six or seven months of water bird population to harvest.

Duck hunting ceased in Lent, the onset of the breeding season. In the later spring and summer Gros Becs would be hunted. Islenos would sit in their yards or on their front porches and whistle them into gun range.

Ducks were preserved for the off season even before refrigeration and freezers. One standard method was to fill a barrel with parboiled ducks, then cover them with melted lard rendered from hogs that the Islenos raised. Smoking was another method of preservation. In the early days almost every family had a smokehouse. Locally grown cedar trees provided fuel for smoking ducks.

Islenos roast ducks in the oven but they also have many recipes for cooking them on top of the stove in a covered iron pot or dutch oven. After parboiling and stuffing garlic under the breast, the duck is prepared like a pot roast, braised or simmered over a low flame in a covered pot. Frequently, sweet potatoes or turnips are cooked with the duck.

Not only did ducks provide food and cash but warmth and comfort as well. Duck feathers were used to stuff feather beds and pillows which provided some insulation from the humid, windy, penetrating marsh winters.

Recently, an elected official, a non-Isleno, told me that the people at Delacroix were a bunch of outlaws. He was referring to their alleged cavalier attitude toward game laws, their supposed shooting over the limit and hunting out of season. His general attitude was that the Islenos were heedless of the natural resources that they depended upon for commerce and sustenance.

I believe that he erred in his judgment about the Islenos' interaction with each other and with the ducks and other species of the marsh. I would argue that Islenos were and are very much aware of their relationship to their environment and that from the earliest days they

developed local rules that were enforced against wanton slaughter of any species which was essential to their lives. These were scrupulously observed.

Several old informants were emphatic about their awareness of the need for conservation. There might not have been law in lower St. Bernard in the sense of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state but there was order in all phases of Isleño life. Older members of communities such as Delacroix would set time-limits to hunting. Apparently, they were very concerned with not reducing the population of ducks from year to year. Generally, no hunting would be allowed after 9:00 a.m. Anyone found hunting after this time would first be warned. If he were caught again, his gun, decoys, and pirogue might be confiscated for several days, thus taking away his source of income. Chelito Campo remembers that when he was a boy in 1909, an elderly man named John Alfonso convinced people to agree that evening hunting would not be tolerated and that they would have to police themselves.

Hunting was and still is seen as an Isleño birthright. They feel that their knowledge of the land and animal populations warrants their own monitoring of hunting. Several Islenos spoke to me about how they detested evening hunting. This type of hunting is believed to be deleterious to maintaining a stable duck population. The reason given is that if someone shoots over a pond in the morning when ducks want to feed this might not be enough to scare them away. However, if a duck was shot at twice in the same day over the same pond, he was unlikely ever to return to that pond or he might even leave the general region. The population of ducks would thus be trained to be wary of feeding at likely hunting spots if this were allowed to continue.

In the old days, ducks were lured into a pond with wooden decoys that the hunter himself carved. Later these were replaced by mass-produced

plastic or rubberoid decoys. Irvan Perez of Poydras is a master carver who has won prizes at various fairs and shows. His expertise and knowledge of contemporary carving as well as decoy carving is a resource of great value. I make a distinction between decoy carving and contemporary carving because the style and function of this work has changed.

The ideal decoy was carved from a cypress root. Old-time hunters used only a sharp hatchet and pocketknife. The hatchet would be used to rough out the body and the knife to carve the head and finish the body. The decoy was made in two parts, the head and neck comprising one part and the body the other. The head and neck were pegged onto the body after both components were completed. When the carving was finished and the two parts assembled, the decoy was painted. This included painting the bottom. Mr. Perez said that some people would not paint the bottom but he thought this was foolish because if the decoy happened to be turned over in a wind, an unpainted bottom might alarm ducks and scare them away. The bottom would be painted the same color as the duck or plain black to camouflage it.

After being painted, the decoys would be hung out to dry on a clothesline until all odor of paint was gone. Then the lines and leads would be attached. Decoys were made with two types of bottoms: a flat bottom was suitable for marshes and shallow water and a rounded bottom for seaworthiness in rough or open water. Mr. Perez claims that these handmade decoys were much more effective than the mass-produced type. He told me: "I'll take a dozen wooden decoys and you take a dozen store-bought and I'll bet that I'll decoy two ducks to your one." He claimed the reason for this is because the wooden decoys were individualized like real ducks. The newer type are all stamped out of a mold and have no individuality and the ducks can spot this homogeniety after slight familiarization.

Today such decoys would be very expensive. Most have become collectors' treasures. The plastic factory-made decoy is seen everywhere. Yet the art of carving ducks has not disappeared in St. Bernard Parish. There is a new style and a new function which is now incorporated into their production. I suggest that carving of ducks has changed from a folk craft to a folk art.

Mr. Perez's present carvings are not to be shot over from a blind. They are sculptures of life-size or smaller than life-size proportions. Usually a diorama or domestic group of ducks is created. Great attention is given to actual reproduction of the duck's form and minute scrutiny is applied to reproducing its natural color and even the texture of feathers. This is a far cry from the decoy which duplicated the silhouette of the duck and a rough approximation of its plumage. Obviously, these carvings are to be admired by people in their homes or on display in museums or exhibits. They are not meant to send a signal to ducks. Today, hundreds of people are interested in this type of carving as recreation and as a creative outlet. What was once a folk craft, the making of duck images that were used as tools of the hunter's trade, has now been transformed, with appropriate changes in technique, into a folk art. This art form, like all art forms, is a communication between man and man. The folk craft was a communication between man and duck. The duck has achieved symbolic status. I believe that it is an essential ethnic symbol.

I suggest that the wild duck is what Mary Douglas would consider a "condensed symbol". Such a symbol condenses "an immensely wide range of references summarized in a series of statements loosely articulated to one another." (Douglas, 1973:29) This symbol pervades economic and expressive areas of Isleno culture. When Islenos are hunting ducks they are participating in a recreational activity which has its own fulfillment but also memorializes

a bygone subsistence activity and economic specialization. The duck also symbolizes male space -- the marsh and the Gulf -- as well as female space -- the home, in its various permutations. It is of the marsh and hence male, but when transformed into food and shelter, it emphasizes home and hearth. This much might be stated about any food source that men secure and women cook. However, the representation of the duck, whether mounted or carved, is placed within space occupied by all, the living room or den. When one walks into the Isleño museum in St. Bernard Parish, one of the first things that strikes the eye is a beautiful watercolor painting by New Orleans artist, Dell Weller. It depicts a marshland scene with flaring ducks. It is titled "Delacroix Pintails". Even the casual visitor must realize that in a museum dedicated to the ethnicity and ethno-history of a people, such a prominent position given to a depiction of ducks is related to an association of values and emotions that places the duck in a central position, as a symbol of the Isleño people.

I would argue that the duck is a symbol of Isleño maleness in that duck hunting is one of, if not the most favored, pasttimes of Isleño men. I have frequently hunted with a Delacroix resident. Although he keeps busy all year long trapping, fishing, alligator hunting, shrimping and shark fishing, he told me: "I am happiest right here in a pirogue with my gun." This was during a Christmas Eve morning hunt. He went on to say that the following morning his eight-year-old son would receive his first shotgun for a Christmas present. After this, my companion would begin to teach him to hunt. "By the time he's fifteen, he'll be a good hunter. Then I'll turn him loose in the marsh." This conversation stresses two points -- the central place that hunting occupies in the Isleño ethos, and the method by which skills for adapting to the marshland are passed on from father to son, from elder to succeeding generation.

The duck is also a symbol of a number of male skills. Most obvious of these is accurate shooting of a shotgun. I have witnessed demonstrations of remarkable skill in this regard. However, the calling in of ducks as well as knowing where ducks are likely to be found is a skill and knowledge which are prerequisites for accurate shooting. To secure knowledge of the ducks' whereabouts, a hunter often relies on his own accumulated experience over the years. He also relies on his friends and relatives who share their information with him. In the old days, people who specialized in trapping in the winter would tell market hunters where ducks were located. In this sense, the duck is a symbol of reciprocity, friendship and community. The hunter might be hunting alone, but very often he has had to rely upon others for any success in the hunt.

Although a communal symbol, the duck is also a symbol of independence and freedom and accomodation to a foreboding environment. To summarize, it encompasses male and female, outdoors and shelter, marsh and home, play and work, craft and art.

Let us not forget that the duck is food and as such represents life. There is an obverse to this also. Several Islenos have told me that there is a fatal representation connected with the duck as well as a vital one. Perhaps this is a result of media education about coronary problems, but nevertheless, people think that ducks which are eaten so much, lead to cholesterol buildup and consequently to heart attacks. So both health and sickness are associated with ducks.

I hope that I have not implied that there is a sacralization of the duck. Islenos are much too practical for that. Perhaps it is we chivos (Spanish for 'goat', but in Isleno Spanish, an outsider or non-Isleno) who sanctify the duck. For example, my hunting partner and I from New Orleans

might be thought of as typical "sports". We have special clothes for hunting as well as shell buckets and other paraphernalia for going into the marsh. We seem to ritualize the whole process of hunting. Once in the marsh, we exaggeratedly camouflage ourselves, literally covering the pirogue with grasses and bushes. Our Isleno companion, on the other hand, is usually dressed in work pants with a blue, hooded sweatshirt. He generally does not carry foul weather gear nor does he wear hip boots. He disdains insect repellant and seems as contemptuous of wet and cold as a muskrat. His shell container is an old Folger's coffee can. He throws his decoys out from the bank after pulling his pirogue up into the grass. He then proceeds to stand up looking for ducks. When he sights them he commences to call them in with a labio-dental "nicknick nicka nick" sound. In brief, this man has no "sporting goods" except his shotgun and shells. These he does not pamper. His gun is covered with rust, half submerged in the water of his boat or pirogue during the trip to and from the hunting spot. (One lifetime neighbor and observer of the Islenos told me that Islenos do not polish their guns: "They pour a can of motor oil down the barrel before they go out for the first hunt of the season. The first shot throws a little oil in their face but this lasts for maintenance for the whole year." An Isleno told me that this observation is not far from wrong. A gun is something to shoot, not pamper.)

The Islenos look upon the marsh rather differently than my city hunting companion and I. To us the marsh is an exotic place to say the least. Perhaps it is almost a holy place and in that sense it is appropriate for special treatment, clothes and awe. Yet to the Isleno, the marsh is everyday, close to home, familiar. It is part of his cultural space. The ducks that he shoots there are integrated into this culture as dominant symbol and practical reinforcement.

MOSS PICKING

Another bygone occupation that older Islenos insist was sometimes the difference between lean rations and a decent livelihood was that of picking and drying Spanish moss for sale to furniture manufacturers. This would be done in the late fall, a slack time between shrimping and trapping seasons. The area around Oak River was a favorite spot. Families would move there, sometimes plant a fall crop, and harvest the moss from the oak trees. Reggio was also a center of moss picking. This area still remains heavily wooded with oak trees which are the ideal niche for the moss. The moss would be cleaned and dried and sold at Ostrica in Plaquemines Parish. Cold weather and the trapping season would signal the end of the moss gathering time. Older informants state that almost every older Isleno had had this experience.

"SPORTS AND "THE CONSERVATION"

Recreational fishermen and hunters from the Greater New Orleans area use the same natural resources that the Islenos utilize for a living. We might borrow a term from biology and state that sports and fishermen are sympatric. They occupy the same territory. Although Islenos and sports are after the same species, the sport's aim and equipment usually limit his catch to food and recreation. There are exceptions. Isleno shrimpers, who pay a state license fee for commercial fishing and have expensive equipment to acquire and maintain, complain about sports with trawls. One Yscloskey resident told me: "Now every sport has a trawl and is really a commercial fisherman. They sell their catches and compete with us. I don't mind if

a man fills up his freezer, but I don't want him to compete with commercial fishermen." Bait fishing, done by Islenos for the sport market can also be controversial. Opponents believe that bait fishing is responsible for killing smaller shrimp. "The Wildlife and Fisheries should give a permit only for commercial fishermen."

All the relations between Islenos and sports are not abrasive. Indeed, Islenos derive income from the presence of sports in the area. The future might bring them together in political mobilization as well. Nevertheless, as will be mentioned in the next chapter, there is a dichotomy between the two lifestyles which illuminates a component of Isleno ethnicity.

Income from sports comes from rental and launching of boats, the sale of bait, ice, beer, and fuel. In essence, the Islenos control access to the marsh to a great extent. Sports must usually enter the marsh or the Gulf by utilizing the marinas of the Islenos. Sport and fisherman are also sometimes allies in league against polluting industries and the more harmful decision of the Corps of Engineers. Sports are interested in being able to continue their recreational fishing and hunting. The oil spill that ruins trapping land also diminishes sport fishing and hunting. It is in this sense that sports and fishermen are sympatric. Their competition and antipathies can be forgotten as they band together against a common foe.

The isolation of the Islenos throughout most of their history caused them to rely on each other. This, coupled with Hispanism and intermarriage, worked to generate a value of tenacity and self-reliance. Another side of this valuational coin is what is seen by some outsiders as suspicion of strangers (non-Islenos) in general and bureaucrats and governmental officials who are seen as threatening their way of life, in particular. I suggest that there is a degree of anarchy among the Islenos.

I use the term in the sense of their being against the state in its manifestation of the functionary responsible for the enforcement of game laws. This phase of their character is an aspect observed from outside their society. Throughout this report I have also stressed the dependence and conformity that prevails within the society.

The same man who told me about "the Conservation" (Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries) attempting to introduce nutria into the marsh by telling the trappers that they would produce a larger muskrat, also told me the following:

> The conservation people never were our friends. There's too much politics involved. The big guy gets away with murder, the little guy gets hanged. Sure, you need such a thing as a conservation policy. I don't believe in animals being killed or hunted to their extinction. But whenever someone comes down here and tries to do their job they are taken out. We need conservation but there's too much politics. I had a friend who was with the federal government. He caught some big guys in Plaquemine and within two weeks he was transferred to North Carolina. For example, in trawling, if you are using too big a net to trawl with, it can be dangerous for the shrimp. In many cases the conservation people will be in cahoots with the illegal trawlers. They would warn them if anybody was coming to arrest them or investigate them. The way the situation is now, if you turn in someone to the conservation they want your name. This leaves you open to revenge. People will sink your boat. That is, if they know that you have informed on them to the government.

I have heard similar sentiments expressed by several men. Whether the specific incidents inferred from the above statement are true or not is less important that that this branch of the government is seen as the most threatening to the Isleno way of life and the most corrupt.

Older Islenos feel that they are the best judges of what, where, and how many of a species can be taken at a particular time. They assert that they had their own folk conservation methods before there ever was a law enforcement arm in their end of the Parish. They stopped hunting in

Lent when ducks were young. They would also stop trapping when they caught too many "mice" in their traps. As long as they were catching large rats they assumed that they were getting part of the adult population. (There was also an economic governor which reinforced this practice. "Mice" do not command as good a price as does a prime adult muskrat.) Old Islenos also told me that when fishermen began to take fish with large amounts of roe in them, they would stop fishing so that they would have future generations of fish to catch. I have already mentioned how the shooting of ducks was regulated by elders. In sum, Islenos feel that fishing and hunting are their birthrights. The species on which they depend for their livelihood occupy the same habitat as they. I suspect that they feel that their intimacy with the habitat gives them the right to be judgmental about anything that pertains to fish, fur and game.

There is a considerable amount of lore which indicates contempt for game wardens. One notorious case deals with a famous duck and goose hunter who sold ducks. A federal undercover agent infiltrated the community, became a friend of the hunter, was the beneficiary of his hospitality and of many favors, and after several months arrested him and testified against him in court. There are also current stories about reputed entrapment of Islenos by game wardens. One fellow at the Island was coming back from hunting with a few ducks and a game warden offered to buy them from him. The man offered to give them to him. "No, I want to buy them", he said. When the Isleno reluctantly agreed, the agent arrested him for selling wild game. At first I was suspected of being a game warden by some people from Delacroix, so wary are they about strangers asking questions about their livelihood.

Fishermen in the Shell Beach-Yscloskey area are bitter about the Wildlife and Fisheries damming up large areas of marshland in the 1960s. The rationale for this was to keep fresh water in the area and consequently improve the habitat for ducks. However, local people believe that this is another case of rich people, "doctors and lawyers", "sports", wanting to ride their outboard motor-propelled boats right up to a duck blind rather than paddle pirogues for a distance. Such a project took on overtones of a class struggle with the Islenos pitted against the "Americanos". The damming did interfere with the flow of bayous and tidal currents and caused siltation. In the past there were abundant shrimp at the mouths of bayous with each outgoing tide. The damming supposedly ruined all that. Now the project is falling into disrepair. The dams are broken in places and streams are starting to flow again. This is one more variation on the folk theme of "outsiders", the "courthouse gang" ignoring or treating cavalierly the Isleno habitat.

INFLATION AND EXPLOITATION

In a sense the Islenos comprise an exploited ethnic class. Their skill and energy are applied to wresting resources from a harsh and dangerous environment. Yet the price they receive for their products is affected by forces beyond lower St. Bernard Parish. For example, I heard a fisherman at Delacroix Island in the late winter of 1981 say that he had just come in from a trip in which he caught $250.00 worth of fish, but used $350.00 worth of fuel. This year the brown shrimp season was the most abundant in history. Yet the price was low and the cost of fuel high. Middlemen pay dockside prices for fish, shrimp and oysters and then either retail these themselves

or wholesale them to retail outlets. The Isleño is part of a system in which entrepreneurs interact. The buyer is an entrepreneur who buffers the Isleno from a degree of fluctuation in the market but in return for this he gets a good price. The skyrocketing cost of fuel is the main expense that has strapped the commercial fisherman. It has cut into his profit so that he has to work longer and harder for diminishing profits. The pursuit of a living in the marsh becomes riskier. Not only do Islenos face higher costs but they have higher expectations about what constitutes a decent life. No longer would Islenos be content to live in palmetto huts, or live in the marsh during trapping season. They desire all the comforts that are available for middle-class Americans. They are willing to work hard for them. A fisherman at Yscloskey told me that his real income is declining. "You used to be able to shrimp (for brown shrimp) and lay off a while, but no more. Now there's no vacation. After shrimping you have to go trapping. Imports hurt us. Why does the country permit this?"

Bumper stickers throughout southern Louisiana plead "Save An Endangered Species: The Commercial Fisherman". This succinctly sums up the state of mind that prevails in the area. These small businessmen would like the same consideration from government bureaucracy as large corporations receive. So far, they feel that their lobbying efforts are not as successful as those of other parties that manipulate them. One bone of contention is the opening of the shrimping season. Small fishermen, who have relatively small boats, believe that the season should be held back until shrimp have a chance to grow larger and consequently, command a higher price. Yet the feeling is that the influence of large canneries is of greater moment in setting the opening of the season. Smaller shrimp are easier to can. Also, larger deep sea operators can go out to offshore shrimping areas where the shrimp

are bigger, before these shrimp move inshore and the small shrimper can get a chance at them.

Certainly there are contradictions in some of the attitudes so far described. On the one hand, the people want less government interference in their lives. On the other, they want more government control of the competition. I suppose that we all fall into this trap -- alternately inveighing against big government and yet not ready to surrender the comforts and security which are by-products of its existence.

Older Islenos state that the man closest to the marsh has always taken all the risk for an unfair share of the retail price. I suspect that the Islenos have adjusted their work to the vagaries of the market. This is a type of enterprise in which success is penalized by low prices. The same applies to fur. One way to get prices up is to reduce production. This is possible with a reserve of capital or the ability to follow another economic pursuit. Indeed, Islenos have done this by adjusting their fishing population to the fluctuations of the market. Fortier stated that the population of the Island was 300 in 1891. It apparently reached a peak in the fur boom from the late 1920s to 1940s. Kammer stated that the population was 1,000 in 1940. Today there are 165 residences at the Island. Migration out of the community or seeking jobs outside of fishing, is one answer to the fluctuations of the market. As mentioned earlier in this report, there are other occupations that Islenos follow either full or part-time. These activities make it possible for traditional occupations to continue. They provide a back-up system for the primary wildlife harvesting of the traditional occupations. This forsaking of traditional occupations is in line with general information on hunter-gatherers: "They regulate their numbers well below carrying capacity." (Netting, 1977:17)

THE ANNUAL CYCLE

Another aspect of a back-up system that insures some survival if a specialization should not provide a profit is, as was mentioned earlier, an alternative livelihood. A calendrical presentation of the Isleño year shows several opportunities for a fisherman to change the focus of his efforts and still follow a traditional lifestyle.

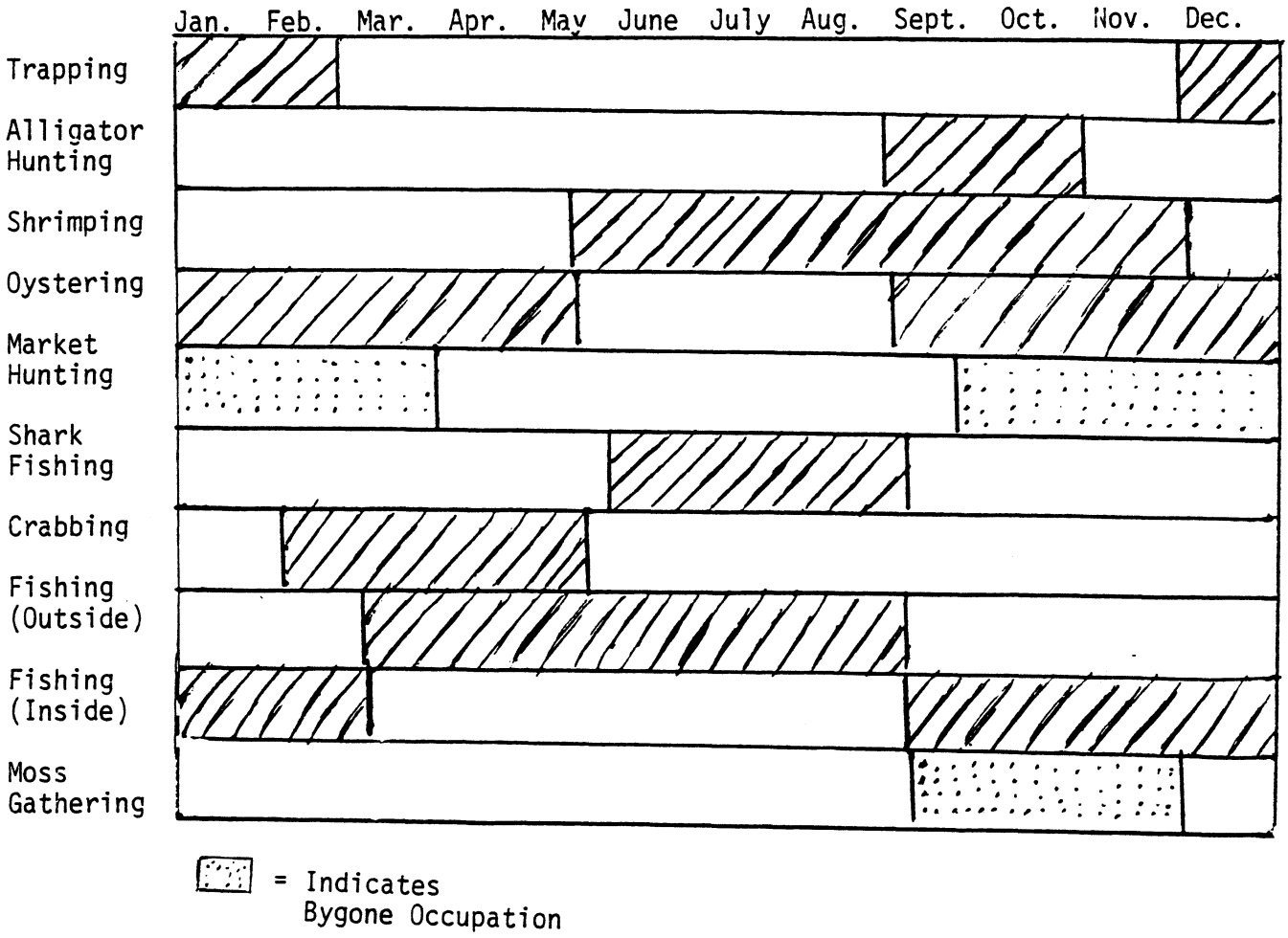

Figure 2.
The Annual Cycle

At a glance one can see that at any time of the year there is some possibility of a "spare" occupation within traditional boundaries. Sometimes people will switch from one to another. For example, if the trapping is poor, fishing might be tried for a few weeks until the trapping improves. This chart does not show all possiblities such as catching minnows for bait which can be sold to the marinas.

CHAPTER FOUR
LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY

The discussion of the ethnic identity of any group must minimally consider language, kinship, and self-appreciation. That is, a symbolic system which is so often the badge of ethnic membership, the marriage and alliance network through which the language is communicated, and what the people themselves think of their ethnicity. In this chapter, I will treat two of these essential topics of Isleño ethnicity -- their Spanish language and their ethnic awareness. In Chapter Five, I will deal with kinship and other social relations. Most of what I write about the Islenos pertains to their ethnicity. Economic specialization also plays a large part in ethnic group formation and maintenance. It also helps to create the boundaries which enclose kinship, ethnic values and language. Yet for purposes of organization, I have treated that also in a separate chapter.

The subject of Isleño ethnicity is more complex than one can convey with a literal translation of their group name from the Spanish. Isleño means "islander", specifically, Canary Islander. However, the origins of the people who inhabit lower St. Bernard Parish are heterogeneous. This is usually the case when one looks for ethnic origins.

Of the original families that settled in Terre-aux-Boeufs in 1779, many descendants with the same surnames survive in lower St. Bernard Parish. Names such as Torres, Alfonso, Marrero, Ramos, de Armas, Gonzales, Rodriguez, Morales, Garcia, Martin, Acosta, Hernandez, Sanchez, Perez, Ramirez, Nunez, Dominguez, Diaz, Lopez, Oramus, Mendoza, Martinez, Molero, Zerpa (Serpas?) are still found in St. Bernard Parish. (Villere, 1972:81) Yet, many other of the original surnames are no longer in evidence. It is

possible that even some of the names that survive do not necessarily stem from the Canary Islands. For example, I know a Lopez whose father came from Galicia. Given the constant reinforcement of Spanish immigrants who were attracted to St. Bernard, a Spanish surname does not positively infer Canarian descent. However, I do believe that it indicates Isleño ethnicity as the term is used in the lower Parish.

The Isleños, like other relatively isolated ethnic groups, strike the casual observer as being homogeneous. Yet a closer examination reveals that they are somewhat more heterogeneous. The original Isleños were not all from the same island. Also there were others than Canarians in the original migration. Forsyth has indicated that there were people from Seville, Galicia, Asturias, Valencia, Murcia, Granada, Portugal, Bilbao, Genoa, Bologna, the Piedmonte, Malta, Mexico and France. (Forsyth, 1979:268) In almost all of these cases, the people from other than Canarian locations were males married to Canary Island women.

My colleague, Samuel G. Armistead, is currently working on an analysis of Isleño Spanish. He will present and critique the rich oral literary tradition of lower St. Bernard Parish as well as write on aspects of the grammar and phonology of current Spanish. I will defer to his expertise in this regard. In this chapter, I shall deal with the socio-linguistic data and analysis. I concern myself here with attitudes toward the language past and present, an account of the vitality of the language in the past, the decline of the language and how this is related to economic change, and attempts at revitalizing the tongue.

One evening in December of 1980, Sam Armistead and I were listening to a tape of Irvan Perez speaking to a woman from the Canary Islands. Mr. Perez had recorded this on one of his journeys to the spiritual home of

of the Isleños. Armistead remarked that one could not really tell who was not native (Canary Island) born. So close were the accents to his expert ear that he would not hesitate to say that St. Bernard Parish Spanish was essentially very close to that spoken in the Canary Islands. Irvan Perez stated that when he went to the Canary Islands, he thought that speaking to the natives reminded him of speaking "to the old-timers at Delacroix Island. Expecially in the interior. The younger people's language has changed, but the rabbit hunters, the conejeros, speak like us." Another informant, a woman in her seventies, told me that the occasional visitors from the Canary Islands who visited Delacroix Island made her feel "that they were family who had been away for a long time and had come home."

Almost all the people I met who spoke Spanish were not literate in the language. In almost all cases they had acquired Spanish as a first language. Sadly, the days of learning Spanish as a first language in St. Bernard Isleño communities are gone.

The linguistic progression in the Parish probably developed something like this: At the end of the 18th century, when the Islenos first settled at Terre-aux-Boeufs, they were monolingual in Spanish. Since they were Iberian settlers in a French-speaking Spanish colony, they perforce had to learn French to communicate with their neighbors. Nevertheless, their linguistic community was large enough to provide wives and most social contacts so their Spanish language persisted. When the colony became an American possession, English became a necessity and the bilingual Islenos became tri-lingual. The French language in St. Bernard dissipated more rapidly than did Spanish, so by the early 20th century, the population was Spanish-English bilingual. Today, there are a few tri-lingual residents to be encountered at the Islands. The last stages of bilingualism seem to be

disappearing. Most young people, indeed people in their early forties, are monolingual in English. There are a few encouraging exceptions, mainly at Delacroix Island, but present indications are that Spanish is dying a slow death in St. Bernard Parish. So in two hundred years, the sequence mentioned earlier, that is, Spanish monolingualism, Spanish-French bilingualism, Spanish-French-English trilingualism, Spanish-English bilingualism and finally, English monolingualism appears to have played out. Harnett Kane spoke of the interesting combinations this linguistic melange could produce. He wrote about spending Christmas with a family in the "Delta". (He does not specify whether this is in St. Bernard or Plaquemines Parish.)

> Over the wine I heard at least six languages in light-hearted conglomeration. The father, born French, had learned Spanish from his wife; he had picked up the Slavic tongue from others and knew a little Italian, a Filipino dialect and considerable English. An ancient neighbor used only French and his shoulders to express himself. Several visitors spoke fluently in Slavic, moderately well in French, and hesitantly in English. One robust oysterman seemed to comprehend every one of the tongues, but his remarks were always in Tocko (Yugoslav). A good-humored couple managed easily; he spoke to her only in French; she answered only in Italian. Their daughter listened to both of them and interjected comment -- only in English; both knew what she said but neither essayed the speech she chose. And when an acquaintance passed, everyone yelled at him, each in a different tongue.
>
> (Kane, 1944:269)

All of the above tongues were certainly spoken in St. Bernard and it is possible that such a gathering could have formed there.

The Spanish tongue was a vital element in the lives of the Isleño communities in that it defined the boundaries of their ethnic consciousness and the major part of their communication network. Time and again, older informants recalled the Iberian nature of their neighborhood. One 83-year-old man from Shell Beach told me:

> All you had here was Spanish people when I was a kid. My own grandfather was from Valencia. He jumped ship and settled at the Island. I was born there and came to Shell Beach in 1926.

This old gentleman's own children do not speak Spanish, although his son-in-law and one grandson retain the language. A 58-year-old resident of the Island recalls the exclusiveness of Delacroix Island in his youth. This exclusiveness, of course, played no small part in helping to create a linguistic circuit which was relatively free from the incursions of English.

> All the people down here, all they did was speak Spanish. Most of us didn't speak English until we started school. Lots of people came on ships and jumped ship. They came from the Canary Islands and other parts of Spain. These people would be hidden by people at the Island. They had to hide for seven years. Lots never read or wrote English. They would blend in with the Islenos. They called everybody else extranjeros or Americanos. If you didn't speak Spanish you were considered an outsider. People worked hard for a living. They were very suspicious of outsiders. They didn't want strangers (at the Island) after dark. It's not so much closed now. There are so many people working different kinds of jobs. There are always men around the Island now. At one time, every able-bodied man was absent around the Island during the day. They were worried about someone coming and committing a crime.

Another comment about cultural isolation of the Island:

> There were very few Frenchmen down there. When the Spanishmens came here the Frenchmen moved across the river. Don't get me wrong. They weren't run off, but people like to stick with their own kind.

Again:

> We grew up speaking Spanish. When I started school, I didn't know any English. Down here (at the Island) it was isolated. The road was so bad that if a peddler went down there peddling, I'm taking about the days before the Model A Ford, and the rain caught him then he couldn't get back. Somebody would give him a room to sleep and a little to eat and he would stay down there until the next day.

The residential isolation of the Island and other Isleño communities was intensified in the trapping season. Running several hundred traps, a

trapper needed all available hours of daylight to survey his trap lines. He thus could not afford to be far away from his trapping lands. He needed to get out in the morning as soon as he could see his first "cane" to which traps are secured. As mentioned in Chapter Three, during the trapping season, the whole family would work as a single economic unit. The father and older sons would run trap lines. The mother, daughters and younger sons would work at the camp. This intensive familial interaction had a bearing on the maintenance of the Spanish language. During this time of the year, Spanish would be the language of the household. Children who were exposed to this experience throughout their childhood seemed to retain Spanish during their later years. One informant at Yscloskey responded to my question as to why some of her children spoke Spanish and some did not: "The older ones had the experience of the family trapping together. The younger ones were born after we stopped 'camping'."

The reason for discontinuing camping was the advent of cheaper and faster boats and motors in the late 1940s and 1950s. It then became possible for people to live at the Island or at Reggio, send their children to school the whole year, and still go out and do a full day's work. I suppose that year-round exposure to English, television, better roads and the possibility of further schooling all had their effect on eroding the dominance of Spanish. Consequently, the causal linkages seem to be: faster boats and other factors reduce the dependency on "camping" during the trapping season with the result that the Isleños are taken out of the marshes and with the consequent extraction of Spanish from their cultural inventory. In other words, isolation and Spanish mutually reinforced each other. Isolation reinforced the network of Spanish and the network of Spanish acted as part of the cultural boundary which reinforced the Isleño sense of self, and cultural uniqueness.

Another economic factor in linguistic retention was that of shrimping. During the trawling season, it was common for several boats to anchor at night and for the crews to sing décimas and speak Spanish. Communal meals might be eaten, songs would be sung, and a few drinks taken. There was a spirit of sociability and communality even on the water.

Isolation helped halt the erosion of the language by Americanisms. However, there was also a constant reinforcement of the tongue by a steady influx of new arrivals from Spain and the Canary Islands. In Chapter One, I have mentioned how the 1850 census attests to the Hispanic character of St. Bernard. What is remarkable is that the other river parishes did not have the same Spanish aspect. St. Charles Parish, above New Orleans, shows not a single person of Spanish or Spanish-American birth: there are many foreign-born, mostly French and English, but not a soul from a Spanish-speaking country. St. James Parish with 591 free white households is also totally devoid of any Spanish-born residents. St. John the Baptist Parish is again remarkable by the absence of Spanish-born residents in that census. A survey of these river parishes seems to imply that, if any person who was a Spanish speaker or born in a Spanish country decided to come to settle in rural Louisiana along the lower Mississippi River Valley or Delta, he made his way to St. Bernard Parish where he could find countryment already settled.

Joseph Chelito Campo of Delacroix Island was born in 1896. His recollections of turn-of-the-century life at the Island include memories of Spanish newcomers entering the community. The population of the Island was heterogeneous. Although there were all sorts of people there who were Spanish speakers, they came from different parts of Spain and the Canary Islands. Many newly-arrived Spanish immigrants to New Orleans would be directed to Isleño communities in St. Bernard Parish by Spanish residents of the city.

Mr. Campo remembers that there was a Mr. Candela who owned a grocery and barroom on Dumaine Street. Whenever bewildered Spanish newcomers contacted him, he would direct them to Delacroix Island (and probably other Spanish communities in St. Bernard Parish). Mr. Campo remembers being told that Mr. Candela would tell these people: "Go over to the Island and those people will help you. They are good people and will put you to work. Even if they don't have a job for you, they will feed you."

Apparently this trickle of legal and illegal immigrants persisted until the 1920s. At that time the enforcement of the immigration laws became stricter and the steady stream of Spanish speakers began to dry up. This was also an important event in the history of the decline of the language in lower St. Bernard Parish.

To determine how much Spanish is still spoken, I conducted a survey of selected households in Yscloskey and Delacroix Island. In Yscloskey, I spoke to members of 38 households in which 101 people resided. Of these, 29 spoke Spanish, seven understood the language but claimed not to speak it, and 65 did not speak the language. Those who speak Spanish are elderly people, as a rule,in their70s and 80s. At the Island, I called on 18 houses in which 44 people live. Twenty-seven speak Spanish, seven understand it, and 10 do not speak the language. I had intended to continue interviewing more people at the Island and at Reggio, but my guide had to return to fishing. I hope to continue this work in the near future. There is a bias in the survey as pursued so far. Both guides who accompanied me and introduced me to the community realized that I wanted to speak to older people so that I could secure ethnohistorical data and folklore. Consequently, they steered me toward people who were well-versed in this regard. However, I did inquire about the children of older respondents and thus believe that I have data which is fairly representative about competence in Spanish.

Spanish seems to have a firmer hold at the Island. I met people whose children, some as young as 14, spoke the language. It is not too uncommon to find people in their 30s and 40s who are bilingual. In the small sample from the Island, it appeared that about three-quarters of the population had either an understanding of Spanish or spoke it. There are about 165 houses at the Island, so the sample is little more than 10% of the total households. At Yscloskey, there are 124 houses and the survey covered about one-third of these dwellings.

	Yscloskey			Delacroix Island		
Age	S	U	N	S	U	N
80 plus	2		1			
70-79	9	2	4	9		
60-69	10	2	3	7	1	
50-59	7	2	8	5		
40-49	1	1	8	2	2	1
30-39			16	1	1	1
20-29			8	2	2	3
10-19			17	1	1	5
	29	7	65	27	7	10

S = Spanish speaker
U = Understands Spanish
N = Non-speaker

Figure 3.
Spanish Language Survey

I am not certain why there should be such a discrepancy in Spanish language competence between the Island and Yscloskey. Originally, most of the Yscloskey population came from the Island, beginning to move to the Shell Beach-Yscloskey area in about the early 1920s. Certainly, Yscloskey was less isolated than the Island, since there had been a railroad line to Shell Beach. A paved road reached Shell Beach and beyond since the 1930s. The U. S. Navy Gunnery School at Shell Beach may have had something to do with the decline of Spanish here. At least one of my female respondents from Yscloskey married a sailor from Ohio who eventually settled down in his wife's home after World War II. None of their seven children speak Spanish. One would expect that, in marriages that are interethnic, the children would not speak Spanish. However, these types of households are not the norm. Most of the people interviewed had married intraethnically, with both spouses coming from a Spanish-speaking tradition. Indeed, some of the homes were occupied by Spaniards who married Shell Beach or Yscloskey women. Even in these cases, the Spanish language was not passed on to the children. One old Spaniard who came to Shell Beach from Galicia when he was 14, was irate about his children not being able to speak Spanish. He told me that whenever he was around, he would speak Spanish to his family, but his wife's family had gotten into the habit of speaking English around the children. Whenever he was away, they would thus be in an English-speaking environment. He did not bring his family into the marsh when he trapped. He said that he would work very hard for six or eight days by himself and then come in to see his family for a few days.

Another Yscloskey resident, a man of 54 years of age, said that he formerly spoke Spanish, but had forgotten the language now although he does understand it. He said that when his grandmother was alive, she would

always speak to him in Spanish. Since she died he has not spoken it much. His own children were not spoken to in Spanish. His own mother told me that her mother-in-law told her: "Don't speak to the children in Spanish. They have to go to school and learn English." She sadly mused: "After we die, there will be no more Spanish down here."

The phenomenon of Spanish-speaking parents not speaking to their children in their first language has many echoes in America. The parents believed that opportunities were available for the English-speaker. The ancestral tongue was kept as a "secret" language which the parents used to communicate things that were to be hidden from their children. At least, this seems to have been the case in intraethnic marriages. There is also an element of shame which probably had much to do with discouraging the traditional transmission of Spanish. A few decades ago, the Spanish-speaker was an object of ridicule. One who was not Americanized was, by extension, one who could not participate in the world in which Americanized people managed and prospered. MacCurdy, who had done pioneer folkloristic and linguistic work among the Islenos in the 1940s, stated that "in Delacroix, it is forbidden to speak Spanish on the school grounds."(MacCurdy, 1950:20)

One woman in her early fifties attested to the accuracy of this observation. She told me that she was slapped in the face by a teacher for speaking Spanish in the Delacroix Island school yard when she was a child.

Currently, there is a bilingual program being implemented in the St. Bernard Parish Public School System. Isleño leaders are not pleased with this. They feel that they should have had more participation in planning curriculum and recruiting children. As a consequence of this, and perhaps to make a statement about their independence from political machinations, the Spanish Cultural and Heritage Society has begun its own

Spanish classes at the Isleño Museum. These classes are for both children and adults.

The minutes of the Spanish Cultural and Heritage Society meeting of September 25, 1978, indicate a discussion of the grant which was awarded to the School Board. The Club members wanted a Title 9 grant which was similar to that awarded to CODOFIL (Counsel for the Development of French in Louisiana). What was awarded the Parish School Board was a Title 7 grant "to increase the English of ethnic groups". This grant states that 80.3% of the students of Sebastian Roy School (the elementary school for lower St. Bernard Parish, located near Reggio) are of limited English-speaking ability. This limited competence in English was determined by a survey of children who hear another language spoken in the community. One Isleño leader is quoted as saying: "Let the School Board know that we do not intend to be taken in . . . tell the Board members that our heritage cannot be bought and we will participate only if this benefits us and helps preserve our heritage and culture."

A gulf has developed between the School Board's bilingual program and the efforts of the Isleño organization which also wants to improve the Spanish competency in the area.

ETHNIC AWARENESS

In the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, Texas hangs the superb portrait by Francisco de Goya of the matador, Petro Romero. I was struck by the likeness of the subject to people I have seen in Delacroix Island and Yscloskey. I do not believe that this is merely the impression of an outsider. The Isleños are quite aware that there are close physical resemblances between them and people from the Canary Islands and the Spanish peninsula. This appreciation of a Spanish physiognomy was

reinforced for me by an Isleño who had visited the Canary Islands. He told me that he was amazed to see how much people in the Canary Islands looked just like people in St. Bernard Parish. He told a story about being with his tour group in the Canary Islands waiting for a guide who was supposed to meet them. Finally, he saw a young woman who was looking around as though waiting for someone. He went up to her and asked her in Spanish if she was looking for a group from the United States to guide. She answered that she was, "but how do you know?" He said that he was the leader of the group. She told him: "You can't be from that group." He asked why not and she said: "Because you are from here." The American tourist looked so much like a Canary Islander that she could not accept the fact that he was from Louisiana.

Awareness of Spanish descent is very apparent among older residents of the Parish. The younger people are currently being made aware of their heritage by a revitalization which has largely been due to the organization and efforts of the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society -- "The Club" -- as it is often referred to by the Isleños. Rather than acquiesce to what may seem inevitable, industrialization, consumerism, economic interdependence, and suburbanization, the people of the Club organized to halt, or at least to modify, the process of language and cultural death brought about by these changes. People such as Frank and Adele Fernandez, Irvan and Louise Perez, the police juror, Henry "Junior" Rodriguez, John Martinez, the late Donald Diaz, Antonia Gonzalez, Betty Martinez, Marie Long, Martin Alfonso, Leon Roberts, Ralph Acosta, and many others, all helped to form and serve as officers of this dynamic organization. Two generous benefactresses, Mrs. Louise Molero O'Toole and Mrs. Mable Molero Quatroy, daughters of the late Manuel Molero, a Delacroix Island merchant and community leader, have donated a handsome 19th century residence which now serves as El Museo De Los Isleños. Recently,

the National Park Service has taken over the management of this installation. It was formally dedicated on October 25, 1981. The Spanish consul, Mr. Enrique Iranzo, as well as one of Spain's greatest living men of letters, Mr. Camilo Jose Cela, were there to inaugurate this institution as a memorial to and perpetuator of the Spanish language in southern Louisiana. Besides representatives of the Louisiana Historical Society and assorted residents of St. Bernard Parish, there was a delegate from the San Antonio, Texas Isleno community, Mr. Rosalio Perez Negrete, the president of Canary Island Descendants. Mr. Negrete and his wife were proud to assist their fellow Islenos in the ceremony.

Although the museum was only recently dedicated and managed by the National Park Service, the building has been used in the past several years as a meeting place for the Club and the site of cultural and social events. It will continue to function as an educational and cultural center where the exhibits which depict the life style and history of the Islenos as well as their crafts and skills, are presented to residents and visitors. In brief, substantial numbers of Islenos are being exposed to the emotional and communal messages that travel through circuits of an ethnic revival movement.

Long before the onset of my own field work, various Islenos were systematically interviewing and tape-recording their fellows. Frank Fernandez and Irvan Perez have been driving forces behind this effort. Not only has a museum been initiated, but a solid beginning has been made in accumulating archival materials based on such tapes. Valuable folk literature, especially in the rich décima song genre, has been preserved. Some of the most venerable repositories of this folk art, men who knew scores of décimas and tales, have recently died. Nevertheless, much of their wisdom and knowledge survives because Isleno folk scholars were able to record their conversation and song. As the final draft of this report is being written (May 1982),

plans are underway for Club officers and members to videotape interviews with the older members of the community.

The Club has worked diligently to foster closer association with the ancestral Spanish homeland and its representatives here in the United States. Several Club members have already made trips to the Canary Islands. There is a plan to grant scholarships to Isleno high school graduates for university study in Spain. Probably the most dramatic event that recently occurred was the visit of the former prime minister of Spain. On March 22, 1981, Senor Adolfo Suarez was a guest of the Isleño Museum and the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society. After a day spent visiting Delacroix Island and the museum, and meeting many members of the Club, Mr. Suarez said that he was impressed with the way the people of Delacroix Island had preserved their heritage.

The Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society grew out of Los Islenos Corporation. A reading of its articles of incorporation reveals the practicality, as well as the idealism, of the organization. The intentions of the association, noted in Article I of Section 1, stress that it is organized to "preserve the Spanish language, memories, and incidents of our Spanish Isleno heritage." Thus its aim is primarily ethnohistorical and linguistic. Article VIII, Section 1, deals with membership. People qualified for membership are those 14 years old or older of Spanish descent, or those "of any descent," who are residents of Reggio, Floriscant, Yscloskey, Woodlake, Hopedale, Shell Beach and Delacroix Island." This last statement implies an important aspect of the nature of Isleno ethnicity and, I believe, a very accurate appreciation of ethnic reality. Both genealogy and geography are combined to characterize the qualifications for joining an ethnic association. That is, the founders of this organization seem to say: "Lower St. Bernard Parish is our country. Our forebears settled here and

created a way of life which our descendants still try to follow. Although people of other ethnic derivation have moved here, they in time have become, or will become, incorporated into the Isleño community through marriage, association, or contiguity." Names like Serigne, Roussel, or Robin are French; yet through the process of cultural absorption, the bearers of the names have become Isleño. In fact, the late Johnny Robin was one of the masters of dècima singing and composition.

It is noteworthy that the Club bylaws stress the communities in the lower end of the Parish where the fishermen and trappers dwell. This affirms the separation which different economic adaptations wrought in the original Isleno population. Implicit in the Club statement about membership, is the fact that those who became fishermen and trappers are the only true Isleños and the ones most eligible for membership in a society which stresses ethnicity derived from Spanish descent. By far, the majority of people with Spanish surnames are found in the upper, suburban, end of the Parish. Yet these are thought to have drifted away from Spanish customs and language which were in large part preserved through the isolation of the marsh adaptation. It is true that there are many people from the Island and other fishing communities who have moved to Chalmette and Arabi and who still take pride in their Isleno heritage. They also take part in Club activities. As a rule these are recent residents of suburbia who still nostalgically look to the marsh communities as their cultural home. It is quite possible that many of their children will have little identification with the fishing and trapping way of life.

Ralph Linton defined nativistic movements as involving a "conscious organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of a culture." The conscious efforts involved are different

from the cultural perpetuation that is part of normal social life. It involves a conviction that there exists a serious threat to the existence of a culture. Also, in nativistic movements, the society selects and focuses on specific elements of its traditional culture for revival and perpetuation. Linton also distinguished two polarized characteristics identifying, inter alia, four distinct types of nativistic movements. One dimension distinguished revivalistic and perpetuative nativism. The other contrasts magical with rational nativism. Revivalistic nativism emphasizes the restoration of a former cultural state; whereas the perpetuative variety aims at the continuity of a current selection of cultural elements. I believe that we can ignore the magical aspect as it applies to the Islenos. Nativistic movements employing rational means generally seek to re-establish old symbols of group worth and self respect which are to be the new focus of a group identity. Polar types are not mutually exclusive. A movement with one set of characteristics is likely to alter through time and take on quite different sets of attributes. (Clinton, 1976 and Linton, 1943)

Applying Linton's categories to St. Bernard Parish, we see that the members of the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society and many other Islenos are trying to initiate a rational-perpetuative-revivalistic movement. They are not trying to turn back the clock of cultural change nor drop out of the twentieth century. They are much too realistic for that. People who have wrested a living from a demanding and dangerous environment, as have the Islenos, must be directed to present needs. Yet they realize that their present is a product of their past; that their skills and values were passed down to them through two hundred years of sadness, joy and laughter. They are aware, they are organized, and they are passionate about retaining, selecting, and perpetuating aspects of their culture that have been threatened

by the forces of industrialization and bureaucratization. They have taken strides on the road to making their people knowledgeable about the cultural riches, courage, and ruggedness of their hardy and independent Spanish ancestors.

The revival underway is a recently organized one. It is too early to determine whether or not it will be successful. The very fact of its existence indicates a degree of cultural weakness. Kroeber, and others who analyzed nativistic movements, have observed that they do not emerge until there is not much hope of perpetuating the culture in question. That is, one never misses the cultural water until the well runs dry. Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the Club so far have been impressive. The members have been successful in getting coverage in the media. Articles in the Times-Picayune and the St. Bernard Voice have encouraged the Club and broadcast its message. Since the founding of the Club in 1976, several members have made trips to the Canary Islands. Members have also gone to Washington, D. C. for the Bicentennial Smithsonian Institution presentation of American folk singing. Décima singers were a great success there and also at the Wolftrap Festival. Through the efforts of the Club, Isleños have begun to celebrate the Feast of San Bernardo, Galvez's patron. This is an old feast which is being renewed. The Club has also been interested in reviving and recording, vanished crafts for the Isleño Museum.

Until now, most members and activities have emanated from the sparsely populated eastern end of the Parish. However, estimates of the total numbers of people of Isleño descent in St. Bernard Parish range from 8,000 to 10,000. It will be interesting to observe whether or not the efforts of the Club will stimulate many of these people to become aware of their Isleno heritage.

COMPONENTS OF ISLEÑO ETHNICITY: A BINARY SCHEME

By an analysis of data presented thus far, we are able to provide a provisional scheme of Isleño ethnicity. By contrasting a set of characteristics one might begin to perceive just what are some of the essential traits of locational, occupational, and social affiliation which in sum define an Isleño as the term is used in this description and which I believe has applicability to the way Islenos perceive their ethnic world.

1.	New Orleans	St. Bernard Parish
2.	High Ground	Marsh
3.	Farming and other high ground occupations	Wild life occupations
4.	Sport	Professional
5.	American	Spanish
6.	Latin American	Old World
7.	Exogamy	Endogamy

Figure 4.

Binary Oppostions Pertaining to Isleno Ethnicity

The two lists posed against each other help to lay out for us some salient considerations of ethnic identity. In each pair, the right-hand element is posited as that which is most appropriate to Isleño identity. This, in turn, calls for another pairing in which a more precise aspect of ethnicity is sought.

1) St. Bernard-New Orleans: New Orleans is still referred to by old-timers as la villa. It is thought of as far-removed in space and culture from St. Bernard Parish. New Orleans is associated with opportunity, but also with perdition, crime, alienation, and racial violence.

2) High Ground-Marsh: As mentioned in Chapter Two, there was an early movement of Islenos to the marsh. This locational focus is crucial for the identification of ethnicity.

3) Farming/Other High Ground Occupations-Wild Life Occupations: Although the Torneros are also descended from the same Iberian ancestors, their different occupational and residential tendencies took them out of the range of Isleño interaction over the course of time. It is quite possible that in the future, other people will be proud to claim Isleno ancestry. Nevertheless, the occupation of fisherman-trapper seems to be closely associated with Isleño identity.

4) Sport-Professional: Although others use the Isleño area as a source of recreational fishing and hunting, as well as part-time residence, there is a definite sense of exclusiveness displayed by those who are commercial fishermen and trappers and those who are referred to as "sports" or "city sports".

5) American-Spanish: This was probably the most crucial ethnic boundary in the past. As it blurs, it may well indicate the decline of Isleño ethnic identification. Associated with this American-Spanish polarity is the clannishness that is implicit throughout this discussion. In the 1920s and perhaps later, if a stranger came into an Isleño community, he would be investigated. Two or three men would be sent by influential elders to go up and ask his business. As one old-timer put it:

> We didn't want any bums around. We didn't want any shady characters. If a person had an excuse to be there, if he knew someone in the community, he would be left alone.

6) Latin American-Old World Spanish: The trait "Spanish" is more precisely marked as Old World Spanish. Occasionally, someone from Cuba might drift into the Isleño community. I suspect that some of these people were actually Canarians who had gone to Cuba en route to the United States.

7) Exogamy-Endogamy: This will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter. The Islenos tend to marry within the confines of their ethnic group. A sample of marriages indicates that the great proportion of unions in the past tended to be ethnically homogeneous. Apparently, barriers to outmarriage were much more pronounced in the not too distant past. One informant who grew up at the Island in the 1920s and 30s mentioned that it was difficult for someone to marry into another "nationality". Even economic distances such as those between rich and poor were not difficult to bridge if both parties were in the Isleño community. As long as a prospective spouse was a decent, upstanding individual, there would be no impediment to marriage . . .

> . . . as long as you could pass the test. The test was that you were honest and had a decent reputation. Now some boys had the reputation of being a little on the rough side and the girls would be steered away from men who hung out with trashy women and drank too much.

In sum, a perusal of the oppositions between Isleños and others help us to present those aspects of identity which define an Isleño -- a resident of lower St. Bernard Parish who is of Canary Island or Peninsular Spanish descent. He or she has economic ties to the marshland and kinship ties to other Spanish descendants. An addendum should be included insofar as incorporation is concerned. Just as people from other parts of Spain were incorporated into Isleño society in the past through residence and ultimately marriage, so in the present such processes continue. A person from outside who migrates to the Island and marries an Isleno woman might himself not be totally accepted as an Isleño, but it is almost certain that his children, if they continue to

reside in the area and follow traditional occupations, will be accepted as a neighbor and fellow ethnic. Some of the most respected Isleños do not have Spanish surnames but their familes were incorporated into the culture and society of the Isleños over the generations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Household Composition and Residence Rules

As stated in Chapter Four, I visited 56 households at Yscloskey and Delacroix Island to secure information on language competence, household composition and kinship. I also compiled a genealogy from an individual which includes 243 connections to Ego and which traverses seven generations. The generalizations about social relations largely derive from these data, as well as from life histories which I gathered during the course of the research.

The Islenos tend to live in single family households but there is a preference for several family units to occupy the same parcel of ground. There seems to be a patrilocal bias in this regard although they are flexible enough to take advantage of any opportunity. It is not unusual to see a large lot at Yscloskey, one that measures 200 by 300 to 500 feet, to be occupied by several residences. Perhaps one will see the oldest home at the front of the lot facing the highway and Bayou Yscloskey and several other houses built at later dates to accomodate married children of the main family. Hawley noted the same proclivity around Donaldsonville. (Hawley, 1976) If building space is too small, it is not out of the ordinary to find children living next door or a few yards down the road. Following are some examples of arrangements that I observed:

1) Several elderly brothers living in a row of houses, with their own children living behind them.
2) A widow with her son living in a house behind her.
3) A widow and her son living in the same dwelling and her first cousin in another house behind them on the same lot.

4) An elderly couple living on one side of a double house with their daughter and son-in-law living on the other side. This is unusual. Although there is a definite tendency, perhaps compulsion, to live close to relatives, as a rule each nuclear family occupies a separate dwelling even if it is a trailer in the yard. Islenos seem to want separate space for a nuclear family.

5) A couple with their single son living in one house and the mother of the husband living alone in another house to the rear.

6) A young couple (aged 34) living with their small children in a house in the rear of a larger house which belongs to the husband's parents. The large house is vacant except for holidays and weekends when the elderly couple, who live in New Orleans, come in for a visit.

7) A couple with a second house on the same lot. This was formerly occupied by their son, but he has moved away and the house is now rented. This is unusual because Islenos in the communities studied, own their own homes or live on their relatives' property.

8) A couple in one house with their son-in-law and daughter living in a trailer on the same lot.

9) A couple and the wife's father living in the same house. This also is exceptional. In this case, the old man is 100 years old and needs care. Usually, even elderly people in their 70s and 80s seem to prefer their own private living facilities.

Of the fifty-six houses visited, there were eleven which exemplified the "compound" arrangement of sharing a lot. The sharing of a lot is the essence of propinquity in residence. When this is not possible, kin keep close by. When the question: "Where do your relatives live?" was asked, the answers indicated that the people of Yscloskey and Delacroix Island tend to stay close together. Twenty of the respondents stated that all of their relatives lived in the same community. Fifteen said that their relatives lived in the same community and in lower St. Bernard Parish. Twenty-three stated that they lived in the same community and in lower St. Bernard Parish, but indicated that one or two lived elsewhere. Usually this was close by, being either in upper St. Bernard (Chalmette or Violet) Orleans, Jefferson or St. Tammany Parishes. There were only a total of five relatives who lived out of state.

Who Is A Relative?

Just who qualifies as a relative is probably situational. I have heard statements such as: "We are all related." The sense of this was that all Islenos in St. Bernard were kin. But more frequently, I have heard that people who share the same surname are not related. To reconcile contradictory statements, often made by the same person at different times, the following should be taken into consideration. As mentioned several times in this report, endogamy seems to be a fact of Isleno social life. Historical data, genealogically derived information, and references from life histories and interviews, all indicate that the Islenos are a population composed of a limited number of Spanish surnames. Also, there is a tendency for people to select as mates, individuals who live close by. If one takes a juridical view of kinship, that is, that an Ego's relatives are all those who stand in a certain genealogical

relationship to him, then it is true that all Islenos are related. However, if one takes the view that kinship systems are culturally designed networks that minimally must serve a function of ecological adaptation and furthermore, that these systems are things to "play" with, then a situational, pragmatic view of kinship will be seen to be appropriate. Points of view can direct the observer to certain conclusions. People in the real world must survive. One of the survival techniques that seems to be consistent with human cultural evolution, is that strict adherence to juridical rules of kinship might box one into a corner. Referring to all residents of lower St. Bernard as relatives could put a strain on the system as well as on the social maneuverability of an individual. Consequently, it behooves one to "cut off" potential kin in order to focus upon everyday exigencies of making a living. From the work carried out thus far, I would cautiously put forth that Islenos see as relatives pretty much what Schneider claims the general American population sees as relatives. That is, that beyond first cousins is rather uncertain territory most of the time. An Isleno extends beyond his primary kin (parents, children, siblings, spouse) to his parents' siblings and their children, that is, uncles, aunts, and first cousins. These are categories that are invariably mentioned when the subject of relatives come up. Certain extensions beyond this network occur when it suits the individual. Cases in point refer to affinal kin (relatives by marriage). If a man does not have a son to help him shrimp or trap, he will work with a son-in-law, or brother-in-law, if personalities are congenial. I suggest that there is an expanding and contracting field of kinship which a person manipulates to suit his needs.

Another relationship which is important is that pertaining to godparent and godchild. I have little data on this category. In my genealogy

of 243 individuals, Ego has two godchildren. One stands in the relationship of second cousin (father's sister's son's daughter) and third cousin (grandmother's sister's son's daughter). In both cases, the surnames are different from that of Ego. If this small evidence constitutes a trend, then we could expect to see an extension of kinship through the godparental-godchild relationship. If close relatives are bounded by first cousin lines, then the godparental-godchild relationship further sets up close supportive and affectionate ties beyond this limitation within the confines of a bilateral kindred as well as beyond it. These relationships are expected to be responsible, and in extreme cases, the godparent is expected to be a surrogate parent in the event of the death of the real parents. Older informants state that godparents were chosen from both the father's and mother's side of the family, thus focusing upon the child as the linchpin which reinforces affinal bonds.

The bounding of close kinfolk along the lines of first cousin is reflected in naming patterns which at least existed several generations ago. At that time, there was a pattern for the oldest son to be named after his father and successive sons to be named for the father's brothers. The oldest daughter would be given the name of her mother. Given the limitation of surnames and the repetition of Christian names, the pervasiveness of nicknames assumes a critical function. Certainly this was true for males since there was more latitude in naming daughters. When I was compiling a genealogy with an informant, he called his son over to ask him more precise information about a certain relative who lived at Hopedale. His son was somewhat confused about the person in question since there were several people with that same name. The son asked what his nickname was -- "I need to know his nickname before I can tell whether or not I know him."

In my genealogy, endogamy and ethnicity is consistent. Of 70 marriages, 55 were ethnically endogamous. Fifteen were cases of outmarriage with spouses of French, Italian, or Anglo-Saxon surnames who came from Biloxi, Gretna, Cut Off, and Lafitte. There were three cases of spouses with the same surname marrying each other. My informant was quick to assure me that they were not related. If my analysis of close kin being bounded by first cousins is correct, this would be true. Informants tell me that such marriages of cousins are fortuitous and not a conscious pattern. One man told me: "I knew a fellow from the Island. He happened to meet a girl from Poydras at a dance. She turned out to be his cousin and they got married, but he did not know this at first."

There were at least three cases of two sisters marrying two brothers and one case of two sisters marrying sons of brothers (first cousins). As a further item of ethnic endogamy and ethnic reinforcement, the genealogy listed seven people from Spain -- three from the Canary Islands, one from Valencia and three from Galicia.

Male Intergenerational Relations

In an article in New Orleans Magazine in 1969, Mr. Mack Melerine, a Delacroix Island resident, is quoted as stating that there is no generation gap at the Island. I am confident that this is an accurate observation of Isleno relationships between the generations made by an experienced and astute analyst. (Wilson 1969:32) This ties in with the ecological adaptation of the Isleno to fishing, trapping and formerly to hunting. Where the older generation holds property well into the maturity of the subsequent generation, one would expect that there would be resentment toward this monopoly by the

demography which is adjusted for population growth, technology, and economic consideration. That is, in times when the marsh and the market can support a considerable number of fishermen, there will be full employment in the sense that all who want to secure a living in the marsh can do so. However, with the increase in efficiency of fishing equipment (boats, trawls, marine engines) and crowding of Isleño waters by outsiders, there occurs a strain upon the environment. Some people must give up the marsh life and seek employment elsewhere. In the above cited article in New Orleans Magazine, Mr. Melerine stated that in 1969, half of the young people at the Island were forsaking the traditional life.

An indication of this population dynamic is that the population of the lower Parish has not grown at the pace of the upper Parish. Except for one almost unoccupied street, Yscloskey is pretty much as it was when I first saw it in the 1940s. During this past fall, hundreds of employees of Kaiser Aluminum were laid off. Several fishermen told me that this was going to put a strain on the marsh, since "every person with a little boat tied up in the Bayou will be out fishing and trawling soon. I don't blame them. A man has to make a living."

I apologize for seeming to have digressed, but the economic factor is an important index of kinship and especially of relations between the generations. My thesis is that, as long as living space is made for the younger generation, the observation of Mr. Melereine about the lack of "generation gap" among the Islenos is true.

Although harmony seems to exist between the generations, this does not mean the younger people among the Isleños take familiarities with their elders. This past summer I spent about a week working with a seventy-year-old man. Although he was almost a patriarch of the community, he

younger generation. Skinner sketched an example of this among the Mossi. (Skinner:1961:55-60) On the other hand, where young people, especially males, are afforded early responsibility training and economic participation by their elders, one would expect youthful resentment to be allayed. Stenning has noted this in the Fulani method of inheritance. (Stenning:1959) Generally, hunters and gatherers have to pass on economic participation to the younger generation at an earlier stage than is the case with people following other adaptive strategies. Consequently, the youth reach adult status (in the economic sense) earlier and do not suffer the suspended adolescence which is so painful and breeds so much bitterness and resentment. Traditionally, girls were expected to help around the house and contribute with their labor to the household. Boys learned the skills of fishing and trapping at an early age, first as a game and later as productive enterprises in the family economic unit. I have seen an eight-year-old boy being taught by his father to set a trap. The father told me that when the child was nine years old he would get a few traps to run near his home at the Island.

I suspect that, as long as there is sufficient space for trapping and fishing, young people can get an early start in becoming socially and economically independent. This independence would allay intergenerational conflict. One eighteen-year-old, already the father of a small boy, has been living with his father while the two of them build a house for him and his young family. By the time this report is written, he should have moved into his new home. In the meantime, he is beginning his career as a fisherman and trapper, working with his father and another experienced member of his community. For those who eschew the marsh life, there are other livelihoods in the area which can support a family, with the marsh pursuits being a source of additional income, food and recreation. There does seem to be a dynamic of

still addressed people a few years older than himself as "Mr." or "Mrs.". This pattern of deference seems to be consistent throughout the population. A young man of thirty-six who I see frequently, always addresses me as Mr. Joe, although I am only thirteen years older than he. A woman in her fifties addresses a man a few years older as Mr. Frank and so it goes in all my observations. While the family unit was together as an economic unit, the oldest male traditionally made decisions relative to economic survival. I know of a case today in which an elderly man lives with his wife near his two sons, aged forty-five and fifty. These two younger men do not go out to the fishing grounds without coming by to see their father and get his opinion. A relative remarked on this to me: "They come by to show their respect to their father, even today."

Although I occasionally heard remarks such as the "younger generation is going to Hell," this was the very rare exception. Usually older people communicate strong affection for the youth of the community. Several told me that they feel sorry for them. They feel that they have a more complex and stressful world to cope with than did their parents.

The Division of Labor and the Status of Women

One Saturday in the fall of 1981, I was introduced to a gentlemen at Delacroix Island. He presently lives in Arabi, but was a native of the Island and visited it frequently. He was very interested in my work. He told me that his father was from Galicia and that he, himself, had been to his father's natal village, a fishing community on the Bay of Biscay. He noted considerable differences in boats, catches and marine technology but what he found most strange was that although the men did all the fishing and maintenance of the boats as they did at the Island, the women handled

all the business transactions. They wholesaled and retailed the fish that the men turned over to them. He saw this as quite a departure from the patterns of allocation of tasks in St. Bernard Parish, where men both fish and handle the business of disposing of the catch.

The above generalization is fairly accurate, but like most observations about work in society, one that is liable to exceptions. During a drive to the Island or to Yscloskey, one will observe lots of men near the boats, tied to the wharves along the Bayou. They will be painting, mending nets, or drying them in front yards. During the trapping season, the men will be trimming the fat from nutria pelts stretched over a post or wringing out rat skins on a washer wringer over the Bayou. Very few women will be seen. If one stops and begins to call at the various homes, he will then be introduced to the Isleño women who will be busy with domestic tasks, keeping their wood-paneled homes spotless with mopping and waxing, cooking meals, or sometimes earning extra income by boiling and picking crabs. From this casual perusal one could make the observation that men work outside the home and women work inside the home.

A problem arises when this statement is made in the presence of several Islenos. Individuals will bring up exceptional cases where this does not hold true. Old-timers will recall that women sometimes tended trot lines and not only cooked but caught the day's food. Today, one can still see women sport-fishing with their husbands as well as skinning rats and drying them at home, while the man of the house treads the marshes tending his traps. One elderly woman from the Island proudly said that she had put on hip boots and walked the prairie trapping with her husband. I have already noted now, in the days of camping, whole families moved into the marsh with women and children being an integral part of the household economic unit.

Where there is a household economic unit, we should not expect the sexes to rigidly adhere to specific jobs. The important thing is that the job or product gets done or is produced. In a pinch, men will do women's work and vice versa, even though some are loath to admit it. I overheard two men speaking about this. One man claimed that women never even went near the wharf. The other refuted this and said that he saw women fishing with a slaughter pole. (A bamboo pole with line but no reel.) Few women worked crops, although in some cases, for example, a widow, this might be a necessity. Women also took care of cows and chickens at times, although men usually milked cows and took care of horses.

Today, the generalization that women take care of the house while men do more strenuous work does seem to hold true. As was stated in Chapter Three, the economic space that the Islenos occupy is divided into 1) male space: the marsh and Gulf from whence come the oysters, fish, crabs, and furs which produce their wealth; and 2) female space: the house and home where women spend most of their time. Today there are more opportunities for women to secure jobs outside of traditional occupations and the two-paycheck family will no doubt soon be commonplace among the Islenos.

Sharing the burden of raising a family is probably more pertinent to the value system of social relations than a precise description of the sexual division of labor. This feeling of sharing seems to be one which overrides expressions of excessive masculinity or demands for the liberation of females. Of course, people always put on their best appearance for company (and ethnographers) but hours of conversation with males do not reveal any male-female tension such as has been reported in literature in other sectors of the United States. Two anecdotes illustrate the ambiguity that is involved with the division of labor and male-female status. One

elderly Isleño framed a dollar bill and placed it in a prominent location in his home. When visitors asked why that banknote was so treated, he answered: "That's the only dollar I received in my whole married life that my wife didn't help me earn. A man from the city asked me to row him across the Bayou once. When I did, he gave me that dollar." Such a statement attests to an awareness of the cooperative nature of Isleno family economic enterprise. Another incident which I observed is also interesting. An Isleno was holding forth on male dominance -- how men always represented the family to the outside and women stayed shyly in the background. Yet this Isleño was a <u>woman</u>, who was doing all the talking, while her husband quietly kept his own counsel while he sat at the same table.

One function of elderly males in the community was reportedly the protection of women. A sixty-year-old man from the Island related the following incident which I believe sheds some light on the relationship between the sexes:

> An outsider moved into the community, a man from Mississippi. This man would beat his wife severely. He drank a lot and beat her when he was drunk. The woman never complained but the sounds were heard and people saw bruises on the poor woman. After this went on for a few days some of the old men told some young men to visit this man. They told him to quit beating his wife. He did not listen to this warning. He again beat his wife. A bunch of Islenos then went into his house and thrashed him. Nothing crippling, you understand, but he sure was sore. This made such an impression on him that he quit drinking and never beat his wife again.

This "protective" attitude could, today, be interpreted as the most arrant manifestation of chauvinism, another form of female dependency upon males. Yet I would prefer to interpret this in the light of a field of generalized reciprocity, mutual respect, and partnership which pervades Isleño life. Such cooperation between the sexes was a necessity for

survival in the harsh environment to which they had adapted. This statement also indicates that male status did not increase with brutality to women. This in itself is a statement of some significance because in some societies, males rise in esteem by their manifesting violent dominance over women.

Some Notes on Child Rearing

When an older Isleño was asked how often women had babies in the old days, he unhesitantly answered: "Every two years. In my family there was no birth control. We had nine children all two years apart. All of us were breast fed." Babies were fed whenever they wanted to be fed. If a child was crying, the breast was offered to placate him. If there were older sisters in the house, the care of the infant would be the responsibility of all the females.

Toilet training could be harsh. It took place about the time the baby walked. If a baby persisted in soiling himself, he would be put in cold water. Toilet training often would be deputed to older siblings. Training for deference to elders began early. Parents demanded obedience of children. Informants state that this instilled respect for the father early in life. One man said that even though his son is a professional man whose income and education surpasses his own, he will never make a major financial decision without consulting his father. Another man told me that he has a married daughter who never smokes in front of him out of respect for his feelings about smoking.

There did seem to be considerably different types of expectations for boys and girls. Girls were expected to take on hard work sooner than boys. One sixty-year-old woman recalled this drudgery:

> We thought that we had luxuries. My mother thought that a washboard was a luxury. We washed white sheets. After we washed them, we rinsed them in blueing, dried them on the grass and then we would wash them again and hang them on the line. We scrubbed the floor with brick dust (as an abrasive). You could eat off it. It was the color of new lumber. Sheets were snow white. Women worked hard. When I was twelve years old, I washed seven lines of clothes for a lady. On a washboard. My pay was an old dress that someone could make smaller for me. We used cistern water -- no hoses. We had to haul water in buckets.

Although boys would ultimately make their own economic contributions, there seemed to be a gap of several years between the male and female contributions to the household. In the boys' life, there was an almost paradisal aspect. Being around boats, fishing, hunting, and trapping had great appeal. There were elements of excitement, adventure, and gamble about these male enterprises. One man showed me a log which his son kept from the time he was eight years old. It was an old diary in which the boy had recorded what ducks he had killed and how many shells he had shot. At the end of each season he tallied his kill and expenditure and worked out the average number of shells that it took to kill each duck. This hunting took place right behind his house, about a two-block walk from his home.

Boys began trapping early as a game and to make a few dollars for expenses. Yet, in a few years they would be expected to work hard alongside their father to support the home. The authority of the father carried over into economic life. A young, unmarried man would be expected to give everything to his father.

I have stated that there seems to be an absence of intergenerational conflict, that there are strong patterns of deferential behavior between young and old, and that the father was an authority figure. With deference and authority, why not intergenerational conflict? I believe that the immediate

vesting of the newly married young man with financial independence allays any resentment toward the father. For example, one man told me that he never received a share in shrimping or trapping from his father. "It was on the day that I married that I got to keep my share of trapping." At that time, he was accorded full economic independence or at least a full share if he wanted to keep working for his father (and uncle, in this case). Relations between father and son seem affectionate and warm and filled with mutual pride in the cases that I have observed. Deceased fathers are mourned and missed. A young man with whom I have hunted admired my shotgun. He always asked when I was going to give it to him. It seemed to me that there was a serious undertone to his banter. One day I told him that the shotgun was the only thing that I had that had belonged to my father. He immediately became serious and said: "Well, I know that you would never part with something like that." His own father had died a few years prior. He never again mentioned wanting my shotgun.

At the death of the father, the mother would keep the property until her death, and then it would be equally divided among all the children. The oldest son would divide the property. He made the decisions that affected all of the children, in effect, taking over the household.

Social Class

Isleños in the lower part of the Parish seem to feel that they are members of a classless society. When a couple of men in their late fifties were asked about social class in their younger days, one said: "We were all poor. You had some business people, very few, and those bought furs and shrimp and fish." There did not seem to be any barriers

to marriage between trapper and storekeeper families. Another younger man treated the question pretty much the same way. He did not think that there were significant differences. "Some people are deeper in debt than others." Yet, observation would lead one to believe that there are differences. Trailers are not as imposing as are the neat, and sometimes rather grand homes at the Island and Yscloskey. Some boats are much larger than others. Some people seem to have more valuable possessions than others. Yet, the myth of classlessness persists.

Perhaps there is a social and economic reality that reinforces this myth. It might well be that temporary luck, a few good consecutive seasons at trapping and shrimping, might give a family the opportunity to build a bigger boat or to buy a bigger car. However, there is an environmental levelling mechanism which might suddenly scour the prairie and quickly put everyone on an equal footing. This is the hurricane, which has wreaked destruction on the Gulf Coast throughout human memory. Hurricane Betsy in 1965 was the last serious threat to life and property in St. Bernard Parish. Thus there has been a sixteen-year period in which class differences might have arisen. People do realize that possessions are transitory. Besides the erosive environment that decays and rusts most artifacts, the threat of hurricanes bringing disaster to one's loved ones, is a constant fact of life.

The information upon which statements about social class are predicated is sensitive material, difficult to secure and to reveal. For the present, suffice it to say that a strong value of equality exists. Marriage patterns which are largely endogamous seem to indicate that there is one pool for mates which would reinforce the idea of classlessness. The Islenos of lower St. Bernard do see themselves as different from the Torneros or "courthouse gang". These high-ground residents, who never relied upon the marsh,

are seen as a group apart. A décima about Boy Molero, a copy of which hangs in the Isleño Museum, recounts how he built a prodigious trawler which required an enormous crew. The song relates how he went about recruiting this crew from the different Isleno communities of lower St. Bernard. However, when he came to the people of El Torno and asked them to join his crew, not one agreed to.

It could be argued that the water Islenos are a faction which is often opposed to the Torneros, or land Isleños. In the past, before the suburbanization of St. Bernard, an alliance between plantation aristocracy, or Creoles, and Torneros held tremendous influence in the Parish. However, I would hesitate to state that the Isleños historically were stratified into two classes, Torneros above, water people below. Probably, in most cases the hunters and fishermen of the 19th century enjoyed more independence and income than did most of the Torneros unless the latter were of very wealthy families.

CHAPTER SIX

ISLEÑO VALUES: IDEALS FOR SURVIVAL IN A HARSH ENVIRONMENT

The ideals of behavior and thought that a people evolve over time must be consonant with their strategy of survival. That is, commitment to the values will not be detrimental to survival and, in fact, should be advantageous to the people. In this section, I shall discuss the Isleno characteristics that stand out in my estimation and which seem adaptive to the marsh life.

Industry

One of the most visible values of the Isleños is belief in hard work. Isleños believe that a fit person should always work. Even disabled persons try to do something to aid those who are close to them. I have seen men in their eighties go out to the marsh to trap. When I complimented one of these men on his ability to walk the prairies, he disavowed anything remarkable about this but rather complained that he "just couldn't get around as good as he used to." Joseph Chelito Campo of Delacroix Island, himself 86 years old, stated that his grandfather lived until he was 112. He fished and hunted until he was 90 when be became blind. Another man, now 70, had a series of heart attacks when he was 49. His physician told him that he had to quit working. After a few weeks of idleness, he told his wife: "If I can't work I might as well die." He then proceeded to begin a new career driving a crew boat for an oil company. Now recently retired, after 20 years at that job, he shrimps and, when I last saw him, he told me that he was getting a three day a week job as a janitor.

Younger men who themselves are hardworking, revere the industry of their fathers and grandfathers. They modestly say that young people today

are just not as tough as the old men and women were. They cite the need for the old timers to row and paddle long distances before the days of the outboard motor. To my view, these younger men are the quintessence of industriousness and toughness.

An older Isleño told me succinctly that hard work and suffering are what have held the Isleños together for two hundred years. This statement focuses on two variables which are posed in a feedback relationship to each other. The hard work was and is essential to earning a living in the marshland and sustaining the community. Suffering and hardship are natural consequences of life in the marsh. The suffering is allayed by the communal support that an individual or family receives during a disaster.

Hard Times

The dècima form of verse composition and song is the foremost item of Isleno expressive culture. This is being analyzed by my colleauge Samuel G. Armistead. These songs are usually ironic, humerous, sarcastic, and as a rule, descriptive of Isleño life. They never deal with tragedy. Apparently, the tragic aspect of life was too common to be a subject for songs. Rather, the decimas are usually sung to stave off the pervasive theme of suffering and hard times. In brief, the dècimas and other expressions of Isleño humor and joy are medicines for melancholy, nostrums for the oppressive forces of climate, sickness, penury and loss. These "hard times" are not per se, what could be called values, but rather the awareness of them and the pride taken in overcoming them is a theme which constantly arises in conversation with older Isleños.

Gathering ethnohistorical information, eliciting a genealogy, or just chatting with people about everyday affairs, usually leads to some statement about loss which is stoically borne. A child of six drowned while playing near the Bayou, a whole family except for the father was wiped out in a hurricane, a relative froze to death in the marsh, a whole community was decimated by an epidemic -- all are examples of personal losses which Isleños feel are their due as dwellers in a hazardous place. Everyone knows of a friend or relative who has been lost in an accident in the Gulf or marsh or succumbed to illness which could have been alleviated with appropriate health care. These tragedies make the types of losses due to economic vagaries seem commonplace.

Chelito Campo of Delacroix Island, born in 1896, recalls in passing, the calamities of his life along with the joys. I asked him if he could tell me about any particular Isleño personality trait that was more evident than others:

> Everybody was so friendly. They stuck together. When the Spanish influenza epidemic came in 1919, we had a hard time. People were very afraid. So many died. One man, his wife and six children all died. We burned his camp. Everybody at the Island owed a debt to Turiano Alfonso and his sons Willie and John. These three took care of all the dead people. We ran out of coffins and had to use pirogues. They wrapped the bodies in white sheets. They wore a rag over their faces. They would collect the bodies and bring them to Terre-aux-Boeufs. (The location of the church and cemetary.) The priest would wear a rag over his face also. In twenty-three days, sixty-three people died. Me and my wife were married one year. My neighbor was from the Canary Islands. He told me that people in Spain kept the flu away by drinking whiskey. He brought me six bottles of Canadian Club. He told me not to worry about the money. We drank and drank. My wife wasn't used to it and she started to stagger. I told her when she got dizzy to go to bed. She nursed the baby and that's the way the baby got the whiskey. We never got the flu.

> Sixty-three people died. Every day you could see the Alfonsos rowing the bodies in a skiff. The bodies were covered with a black tarpaulin. By the time they reached Terre-aux-Boeufs they would get stiff sometimes and they had to be removed with a block and tackle.
>
> The 1915 storm came with no warning. We never had radios then. At 4:00 p.m. the water suddenly rose and the full blast of the wind hit us. It blew one house into Lake Lery. All inside were drowned. Some people saved themselves by climbing trees. Twenty-one died in the storm.
>
> Then there was the 1927 crevasse. (A man-made break in the levee to relieve the pressure of high water at New Orleans. The Bonnet Carre Spillway, built in the 1930s, has served this purpose subsequently.) A man came to tell us to get out. If the crevasse would not be opened then New Orleans would be lost and we all would be lost as well. (That is, the city was the market for the Islenos' products. Its demise would bankrupt the Islenos even if they managed to ride out the flood.) We understood. I sold all my cattle. The slaughter house gave me $2,200.00. Three months after, we returned. My house had three feet of water in it. All the sheet rock was ruined near the bottom. The doors and windows were swollen. I took the $2,200 that I got for the cattle plus $300 that I borrowed and repaired my house. People suggested that I should put in a claim (with the state) to get my money back. I refused. After all they fed me and lodged me in New Orleans for ninety days. You save your life. That's all you want.

By 1965, Mr. Campo and his wife were operating a thriving restaurant and bar at the Island. Hurricane Betsy wiped them out with a loss of $70,000.00. Today, Mr. Campo accepts all of this philosophically. He does not let it affect his basically optimistic view of life.

Another man spoke to Professor Armistead and myself about the hard life that the Islenos face. This man, in his mid-fifties, with a face that seemed beaten out of a piece of mahogany with a ballpeen hammer, matter-of-factly related how one could not grow anything at the Island any more since the salt water frequently covers one's property. He spoke about the advance of the Gulf, a theme that constantly comes up in conversation. He said that there is less river water coming into the marsh to enrich it with silt and that "the Gulf is

coming to take back what belongs to her." He proceeded to speak about changes that had taken place in his lifetime. "The Gulf is eating up the shore, taking the marsh. At Breton Island, we used to hunt rabbits. Now they are all gone. We used to seine for trout." (That is, they would walk in the water pulling a net.) "You could do this then because the water was only up to your waist. Now it is over your head."

He mused about why the Islenos put up with all this hardship. "It's a rough life but I can't leave it. This is the only thing that I know. The one thing that you can say about it is that you can be an independent man."

I believe that this last statement reveals a major theme that runs through the Islenos ethos. Life is hard but with work and help from your people, you can achieve a degree of independence that most people lack.

Reciprocity

The rigors of marsh living demand hard work. However, this alone is not enough to ensure survival. People must rely on themselves but they must also rely on others to help them. Neighbors provided aid and support in times of loss to such a degree that I would characterize a major component of the traditional Isleno exchange network as one of generalized reciprocity. I have reference here to that mode of exchange in which neither the value of the gift is calculated nor the time of repayment is specified. (Haviland, 1981:295). As one old resident of Shell Beach told me: "You had nobody but your neighbors to rely on in the old days. We did not have social security. We had to make it without government help. If you were sick, your friends and neighbors would help."

This reciprocity carries over to the economic sphere as well as the social realm. For example, a trapper who exclusively traps muskrats, will permit others who only trap otters to use his land. In this way, two families can use the same parcel of land since they are each adapting to a different ecological niche. Market hunters would secure information about ducks from trappers. Essentially, reciprocity means looking after your friends' interests as well as your own. One morning I was with an Isleño returning to Delacroix Island. He pulled his boat over to the bank and clubbed an otter caught in a muskrat trap. If he had not killed it, it would have worked itself loose in a half-hour, he estimated. He took the dead otter to the person who owned the land. He told me that this man had a large freezer in which he let him store his own animals until he got a chance to skin them.

In the old days before refrigeration, this reciprocity extended to sharing large animals. Pritchard noted the sharing of large butcherings such as hogs and beef. This is similar to Schneider's observations and analysis of Pakot cow sacrifice. By rotating the slaughtering and sharing what was killed, people were making an investment in their communities and receiving income for those investments as their neighbors returned the favor. Sharing of food even extended to such minor incidents as market hunters giving away the gizzards of ducks to non-hunting neighbors. One old Shell Beach resident told me that such sharing of gizzards as well as hearts and livers of ducks, made the difference between hunger and repletion more than once during his childhood. The ultimate vignette of reciprocity and cooperation that I have heard about is this: Some elderly ladies told me of their life at the Island and the conversation eventually turned to "hard times". They all assured me that sometimes people were so hard up that they actually used a communal ham bone with which to cook beans. After the person who originally acquired the bone was

finished, she would hang it from the back porch by a string. Any neighbor who needed "seasoning" would then be able to borrow it, then return it to the owner's back porch for others to use!

The reciprocal ethos that prevailed permitted one to use another's property as long as he did not damage it. This could sometimes save a life. For example, if someone was caught in the marsh in bad weather, it was acceptable to go into someone else's camp for shelter and warmth. The user was expected to leave the place as he found it and replace anything used such as food or fuel.

Funeral contributions were, and occasionally still are, important sources of support for widows. Collections would be taken at wakes. Everybody would be expected to throw in what money he or she could afford. This would be presented to the widow as a communal offering. More importantly, it was a symbol of the community's intention to look after the survivor. One Delacroix Island lady told me that children were taught at an early age to be especially respectful of widows. For example, "if a widow asked you to go to the store for her, you better not take anything for it. Also, you should tell the storekeeper that you were buying for a widow and he would usually give you a little something extra, such as an additional egg with a dozen."

Almost every conversation includes examples of reciprocal relations. One woman told me: "They might talk about each other, but just let someone say over his CB tht his boat was in trouble, and everybody in range will go to his aid." One old Shell Beach resident is remembered for having just brought his trawl to the stern of his boat when he was told that someone at Shell Beach had died. He did not bother to even haul in the big load of shrimp because he was in a hurry to go and see if he could be of any help to the survivors of the deceased. It was common for neighbors to run each other's traps if one was sick. People who did not shrimp would never be

refused if they went to the dock with a bucket or pot when a shrimp boat was unloading. Seine captains would hold back a share of the catch for the sick or unfortunate in the community.

Appreciation of Skill and Physical Prowess

There is a high value placed upon manual skills such as boatbuilding, decoy carving, boat handling, shooting a shotgun or rifle, and engine repair. The marsh dweller is called upon to exercise an array of skills that support his lifestyle. He should be a good carpenter, mechanic, navigator and shipwright. Before salt water inundation, people at the Island were also vegetable gardeners and cattle men. Although many of the old timers were illiterate, they still built pirogues,trawlers, and luggers from "plans in their heads." All of the skills that this and other occupational pursuits entail are highly appreciated by Islenos.

Boating skills bestow status upon a man. I have an acquaintance who is highly respected for his boating and navigational skills. I saw a demonstration of the former one day when we were returning to the Island. He decided to take short cut home. This entailed travelling down a bayou which was dammed near its confluence with Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. That is, a sheet wall of concrete was erected across the bayou from almost bank to bank. The opening between dam and bank on one side was about two-thirds the width of the boat. Somehow, we went through the opening by carefully adjusting the weight of the passengers to the rear and one side and rocking the boat so that it literally sped through almost balanced on one gunwale. When I complimented the skipper on his skill, he expanded a bit. He said that a few days before, he and his son travelled about a quarter-mile down

a straight ditch which was really half the size of the boat's width. Yet, he had a good head of speed and the propeller of his engine was in the water. He said his son asked him: "What happens if we have to turn around, Daddy?" The father retorted: "We better not even have to stop."

Skill in navigation is also admired. The marsh is constantly changing due to storm, erosion and flood. Even residents of marsh communities are not always sure about the best means of travel if they have not been in an area for some time. Knowing one's bearings and being aware of short cuts can mean profit in that fuel can be saved and access to productive fishing grounds can be gained.

In December of 1980, my colleagues and I visited Mr. Joseph Gonzales, a boatbuilder at Yscloskey. Mr. Gonzales has been building a boat in his yard. It is 60 by 21 feet, a magnificant oyster lugger with flowing lines. It is constructed entirely of cypress. Mr. Gonzales states that it will have a capacity for 600 barrels of oysters. I noted that most newer boats were built of materials such as fiberglass, steel, and aluminum. Mr. Gonzales said that this was true, that cypress was very hard to obtain, and that the other materials were easier to maintain. However, he emphatically stated that one could not get the lines in these materials that could be sculpted with cypress. He had salvaged his cypress from various locations. In some cases, he used lumber from trees that he had hauled and which he had had milled. Some material came from timbers from demolished buildings. The framework was completed and he had begun the boarding of the hull. The boards were sturdy, about three inches by one and one-quarter inches thick. The boards are screwed into the ribs and countersunk a half-inch. The screw hole is then plugged with a piece of cypress that has been punched out. This tight plug is glued and then sanded. The finished skin is a perfectly smooth surface with no

indentations or visible screws. Mr. Gonzales told me that he had built thirty boats. He uses no plans except for the "plans in his head." He also proudly showed us his home which he built himself. The interior, like all Isleno homes, is immaculate. This home is especially grand because he built cabinets and laid his floors with rich, dark, pecan woods.

All of the skills that pertain directly to fishing, shrimping, and hunting are proudly boasted of by practitioners and their friends. In discussions about these necessary economic aptitudes, one gets the impression that the work of Islenos is also a large part play, as far as men's work is concerned. As it is difficult to separate values from economics, so is it difficult consistently to separate work and play into mutually exclusive areas. Market hunters enjoyed hunting ducks. Fishermen and shrimpers labor hard, but a haul or drag is always a sort of gamble. Although commercial enterprises, these pursuits entail a degree of sport. (I hasten to stress that there is considerable difference between the semantic domains of Sport and Fisherman as stated in Chapters Three and Four.)

The catalog of skills and specialities in an Isleno community has a bearing on reciprocity as well as knowledge. This is because it is shared knowledge. For example, a particular individual might have skills in wiring a boat or other electrician's knowledge. He would be expected to share his knowledge with others. The same would apply to those persons who could pack a wheel or fix shotguns, or make trawls. There was always an exchange of skills, including even the pulling of teeth. There was also free access to specialized tools. For example, one individual might own a wheelpuller or valve lifter. In effect, this became the community tool. The usual rejoinder when someone asked to borrow the too would be: "So-and-so has it. Go ask him." That is, the actual owner might not have seen the tool

for some time but knew that it was somewhere in the community, circulating among those who had need of it.

Good Times

Although hard times are persistent and always possible, the Islenos do not always dwell upon them to the point of morbidity. In the midst of toil there is the reward of the good catch. Countering death and loss were, and are, the communal dances and parties. A sixty-one-year-old Delacroix Island lady vividly remembers these dances of her youth:

> The Isaac Peterson Band would come down here to play. Also Papa Celestine's Band. The would come early on a Saturday afternoon and play from the back of a truck which would go down the road to Shell Beach and Yscloskey. People would hear them playing and know that there was a dance at the Island that night. Everyone would come from all over St. Bernard and even the city. The cost was $1.00 a couple to get in. There were three dance halls here. Tony Molero, Vincent Fabra, and the Melerine Brothers. All those halls have fallen down. We had some good times here. At midnight the band would play "Little Liza Jane" and that meant that it was the last dance. Then people might want to pass the hat to make the band keep playing for three or four more hours. (Another informant told me that at times, Delacroix residents would keep a band down there for days at a time. Mardi Gras weekend would be a typical non-stop dance.) There were no fights until the _____boys grew up. They would fight with everybody and each other whenever their daddy had a dance at his hall. The dance halls did not compete. Dances would rotate so each would have a dance every third Saturday.
>
> At carnival everybody masked: men, women and children. We did not have any parades here but we had a wonderful time -- a whale of a time at the dances. One time I dressed up in my brother-in-law's suit. With three-inch heels it fit me to a tee. We made our own face masks. Sometimes we would buy little black masks from the peddlar, but we would add to them by sewing material around them. At dances at Mardi Gras and

> at other times there was always gumbo, which sold for 25¢ a bowl. It was chicken and shrimp gumbo.
>
> People would look forward to Saturday nights. Casimir Gonzales would not miss a dance. He would come in from fishing. (Another informant said that this was no means always the case. Some men kept their sons out fishing if the shrimp were running. This would be the most frustrating time of a young man's life -- being out in the marsh or Gulf on a Saturday night with the older men of the crew, usually his father or uncle, needling him about how "he wished he were back at the Island dancing with pretty little so-and-so".)
>
> Dances were very exciting. They were the social event of the week. Everybody respected everybody else. It was a pleasure to go. The dances stopped when the Melerines had trouble. Some of them died. Dances were every week but they were cancelled when somebody died. I remember that somebody dropped dead at a dance. I was no more than two feet from Mr. _____. He was old. They stopped the dance then. He loved to dance. (I interjected that he went the way he probably would have liked and she emphatically agreed.) We danced the Charleston, the Mexican Hat Dance. The waltz was popular. Everybody spoke Spanish at the dances.

The dances were communal affairs for men and women. As a rule, the barrooms were the domains of males. These would be alive with song, braggadocio, and laughter tuned to the music of slot machines. There were always card games around, especially during the trapping season, when gamblers with enormous rolls of cash would come down to play with the trappers and fur buyers. An Island resident remembers a fur buyer with a $30,000 bankroll getting drunk and passing out in his car filled with rat skins. He woke up with a hangover and a gamy smell, but his money was still in his pocket.

Christmas was another big celebration. Trappers would even bring their families in from the camps. For three or four days nobody worked. Grocery stores and barrooms would start selling liquor and wine two or three weeks ahead of time. Women would cook for several days and place the food

aside for a monumental Christmas feast. "Then maybe on Christmas Eve, they would start celebrating. All the wine or liquor you could drink. All the different dishes -- fried ducks, gumbos, Spanish dishes, fried potatoes, and pies."

Thus Islenos played hard just as they worked hard. Another break in the drudgery of the trapping season would be the delivery of groceries to the camp. Usually a bottle of whiskey or wine would be part of the week's supplies. There was time for a few drinks to break the monotony of the marsh life. One old-timer said that one of the travelling grocers at the Island would have a drink with each trapper on his route. By the time he returned to the Island he could hardly get out of his boat, to such a degree of enthusiasm had he mixed business and pleasure.

Other Traits

Other self-characterizations that Islenos are fond of citing are: patriotism, tenacity, clannishness, cleanliness, cohesion, pride, honesty, and humor.

One Spanish immigrant told me that he was proud to be an American. He thinks that this is the greatest country in the world and he hates to see anybody knock it, especially foreigners. Islenos were quick to serve in the nation's wars. Already mentioned was the fact that the Island was empty of young males during World Ward II. Islenos were participants in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, which was actually fought in St. Bernard Parish, as well as the naval battle of Lake Borgne in the same campaign.

The clannishness of Islenos is a trait that is often cited by outsiders. "They stick together" is probably the most opprobrious statement

that can be applied to an ethnic group. Of course, this is an external view. The internal view reveals factions and dissensions as among any people. Evans-Pritchard stressed the "massing effect" in his classic ethnography, The Nuer. Just as Nuer coalesce and forget their differences to band together against higher orders of relationships, so might Isleños be seen to resist outsiders especially when they threaten their livelihood. (Evans-Pritchard, 1940:) Suspicion of outsiders has been mentioned above in the section on ethnicity. Such clannishness has been reinforced by isolation and the endogamy it bred. Nevertheless, people who have taken the trouble or had the opportunity to develop close relationships with the Isleños have invariably spoken about their hospitality and generosity.

Over and over in conversation, the cohesiveness of Isleños is brought up. The general theme is that Isleños had to stick together in order to survive.

Aspects of their pride and independence were noticeable to me several times in this research. I usually pay informants $5.00 an hour for extended interviews. In several cases, during the Isleño fieldwork, people were embarrassed by this. Occasionally, my money would be refused outright with the informant saying that he or she was very happy to be of service in this work which they had a keen interest in seeing completed.

The Isleño deference to elders has already been mentioned in the previous chapters. A lady from the Island remembers that:

> Boys helped their fathers trap and fish. A young man would have to get permission to go to a dance. He had better behave. He had better not insult any young lady. There was no obscene language. Other relatives than parents felt free to discipline the child. If a child did not listen, they would tell the father. Children were seen and not heard.

This deferential attitude toward the aged apparently buttressed what could be called a gerontocracy -- rule by the elders -- in the old days.

That is, the elders were the law. They enforced sanctions and maintained order. Examples of this have already been mentioned in the case of hunting rules and protection of women.

The honesty of the Isleños was the foremost characteristic mentioned by one lady. When I asked her to come up with one word which would describe the Isleños, she said:

> I would say that they were very honest, truthful in every respect. Everybody knew everybodyelse. People would go out of their way to do someone a favor and think nothing of it. Today there is more of a price placed on this. People are not as willing to do someone a favor. It was more like a big family then. (She is referring to the 1920s and 1930s.)

Outsiders also attest to the Isleños' honesty. I knew a credit manager for a hospital who had a reputation for not trusting anybody. Yet he told me that he felt safe extending credit to Islenos. His experience was that they paid their bills whenever they could.

An Isleño Trickster

These characteristics and values are all part of ideal culture. To maintain that all Isleños scrupulously followed these ideals every moment of their lives would be naive. An individual who seems to refute many of these values, but does emphasize that of humor, was a resident of the Island. A folklorist coming across these tales would classify such a character in the trickster genre. Yet, he is a real person. I have seen his photograph and there is even a décima composed about him. For purposes of protecting the privacy of his family, I will refer to him as "Pedro". This man "just didn't fit the mold" as one informant told me. He always went his own way, he openly stole from people and nobody did anything about it. Apparently, he was a

very engaging type and though irritating at times, he was also something of a folk hero, insofar as his skill at evading game wardens was concerned. He was a market hunter and depended on the sale of his ducks to provide for his family. Consequently, he scoffed at game laws, hunting seasons and limits on game. The Wildlife and Fisheries people decided to send another Isleno to apprehend him. They deputized a famous Isleño (I will call him "Manuel") renowned for his strength and courage to arrest Pedro. This was after the Conservation people had been threatened with being shot when they tried to arrest Pedro on a previous occasion. Even the powers of the state were intimidated by him. Manuel came across Pedro one day when he had a boat load of ducks. He told Pedro that he was now a conservation officer and that he had to arrest him. The old man was sitting in his pirogue with his shotgun across his knees. Manuel told him: "I have to take those ducks." The hunter answered calmly: "Go ahead and take them." Manuel later told friends that from the look in old Pedro's eyes, he knew that he would have been shot if he had tried to touch those ducks. So, he just let him go and went to resign his commission as an officer in the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission..

Once a man at Shell Beach built a particularly fine skiff of which he was very proud. Pedro stole it, rowed it to the Island and proceeded to raffle it off at a dollar a chance. After selling numerous chances, he pocketed the money and announced that the winner of the skiff was the actual owner. He brought the boat back to the owner who thought that he had seen the last of his boat. Pedro told him that his boat had been stolen, but he, Pedro, had recovered it for him. The owner then gave Pedro a reward for his honesty!

One day, Pedro stole a red boat-light from an informant's father. Later he told the erstwhile owner: "So-and-so is a thief. You know that red light that I stole from you? He stole it from me."

Apparently, Pedro was a great mimic. The first telephone in the area was at Reggio. Pedro called up the French Market, where one of the Isleño merchants was going for a load of groceries. He said that he wanted to place an order for Manuel Molero and for the Isleño at the Market to bring the order back to the Island with him. Pedro imitated Molero's voice over the telephone.

Pedro would barge into someone's house in the morning and help himself to biscuits and coffee. This interchange was certainly in keeping with Isleño readiness to share, but against the trait of pride and independence that kept people from asking for help unless it was absolutely necessary.

Pedro illustrates some traits that are antithetical to Isleño values. He was, in a sense, the exception that helps us to see the pattern of the Isleño system. People seldom lead perfect lives in accord with the values of their cultures. Yet the values that are listed and discussed here are goals, desired attributes which I have seen manifested. When operating at peak efficiency, the value system is as supportive of life, as is the economic system, in the hostile environment occupied by the Isleños.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

Handicrafts

Almost every Isleño home has some article of handicraft on display. Further emphasizing the symbolic force of the wild duck mentioned in Chapter Three is the presence of mounted or carved ducks on the walls of several homes. Home-made objects are in evidence in almost every living room. One lady, Mrs. Robin, has an unusual avocation. She makes display tables for bric-a-brac out of rope spools. These are covered with various materials and either presented singly or stacked one upon another. Mrs. Robin also practices what seems to be one of the most popular female pastimes, crocheting. Almost every home has a crocheted tablecloth or shawl displayed. One lady makes or rather modifies commercially available dolls with handsewn 19th century clothes. A fourteen-year-old boy makes interesting models of Isleno shrimp boats with detailed superstructures, rigging and winches. He also builds oil field work boats and rigs. An elderly woman builds miniature furniture from clothespins. A burly fisherman makes flower pot holders out of crab trap rope. They are quite handsome with intricate plaits. All of these examples of handiwork imply indoor occupations which reflect the value of industry.

One of the most scintillating examples of handicraft is the long train worn by "The Spanish Queen", the winner of a beauty contest sponsored by the Spanish Club. This cape is about twelve feet long. It is decorated with sequined and beaded figures. A three-foot high female flamenco dancer in dark red and black struts over a shrimp trawler picked out in red, white, and blue beads. In a single artifact, there are thus depicted male and female symbols, patriotic colors and the importance of the Hispanic heritage. The

The motif of a flamenco dancer is a popular one found in Isleño homes. (Bullfighters on black velvet are also conspicuous Hispanic symbols.) The shrimp boat, of course, communicates the male domain -- one of the occupations which support and maintain ethnicity. The number of hours of work that went into this cape is staggering.

The Décima

Except for the décima, which was sung at gatherings in the past, Isleno popular music seems to be influenced by the larger American culture. Even in the past, musical tastes seemed to have been eclectic. Informants have stated that Negro jazz bands played at the Island, a fact which gives the Islenos a small part in the nurturing of jazz. Today's Isleño musicians seem to be partial to country and western music.

The décima has been, and will again be, treated in more detail by Professor Armistead in his forthcoming study. At the risk of duplicating his efforts, I merely want to mention here the frame of presentation of the décima. Usually composers of décimas would keep them secret until they were prepared to "unveil" them at some special occasion. This was strictly oral literature. The composers were illiterate in Spanish and both composition and delivery were from memory. The appropriate occasion might be a wedding, dance, or party. At that time, the singer would come forward and perform. Eventually, several variations for each décima might develop. A song might, for instance, originate in Delacroix Island, then be picked up in Yscloskey, where the names of people might be changed. There was excitement at these gatherings if there was a rumor that a new décima was to be presented. People were tense with expectation trying to guess what and who the décima composer would sing about.

Everybody who had committed some pecadillo, "made a fugaboo somewhere down the line," was worried. They thought that they might become the subject of a song. Usually there was a band at a wedding -- a country band, a violin and accordian, but the dècima was the highlight of the evening. "The dècima was what everybody wanted. In other words, they wanted to find out if anybody had recognized their fugaboo -- if some lady had gone with another man."

It was a great honor to have a dècima composed about something one had done, even if it were derogatory. People also hinted, not so subtly, that certain dècima composers should make a dècima about them. This would lend them a degree of immortality even if the dècima were scathing. Islenos learned the dècimas from their elders just as they learned so much other lore. Celebrations at Christmas and Mardi Gras would also be appropriate times for dècima singing.

The topics of these dècimas illustrate the values and concerns of Isleño life. Things like class stratification or the contrast between Tornero and Isleno, the plight of the crab fisherman, an entire host of Isleno values, events, and personality traits can be illustrated by this very rich tradition of folk poetry which now, unfortunately, is dying out. In brief, the dècimas comprise a large part of Isleño mythology. For a concise description of the form, see Armistead, 1981. As an example of this genre, I have copied "La Vida de un jaibero" collected by Armistead from Mr. John Robin, 72 years old, at Yscloskey, on October 27, 1975.

1. Senores, yo voy contar
y la vida de un jaibero,
Todo se vuelven pestina,
trabajo y poco dinero.

2. Cuando yo salí calando,
fue pa la Lacre l'Elwa
Y a fuersa de haber palangre,
no sabia ónde calá.

3. Cuando yo salí calando,
derecho pa'l otro la'o,
uigo una vo que disia:
"Agui estoy medio yeal'o."

4. Di lo concho a la costa,
a fuersa de abatimiento;
tó se dise y el jaibero:
"¡Maldita sea tanto viento!"

5. Y di una lata a la otra
y di a un pobre jaibero.
S'echó a tierra a corta yerba
y le cayó un avispero.

6. Y tenía el pelo largo
y se l'enredó en los mangles
y no podía salir
a recorrer su palangres.

7. Companero, que vio eso,
le cayó atrá con la lata.
Esto si que no e muy bueno;
se botó de cuatro patas.

8. Cuando se muere un jaibero,
que naiden le ponga luto,
porque se fue'a descansá
el probesito defunto.

Gentlemen, I'm going to tell you
about a crab fisherman's life.
It's all just stinking bait,
work and little money.

When I went to lay my lines,
it was to Lake Eloi.
But there were already so many lines
that I couldn't put mine out.

When I went to lay my lines
straight across to the other side,
I heard a voice that was saying:
"Here I'm half frozen to death."

I ran up against the shore,
the tide was beating in;
the poor crabber says to himself:
"Damn all this wind!"

I struck one pole against another
and I hit a poor crabber.
He went on shore to gather grass
and a bee's nest fell on him.

And his hair was all long
and it got tangled in the mangroves
and he couldn't go out
to check on his lines.

His partner, when he saw that,
hit him with a pole from behind.
That sure is no good;
he fell down on all fours.

When a crab fisherman dies,
let no one mourn for him,
cause that poor deceased fellow
just went to his rest.

(Armistead, 1981:21-23)

Religion and Folk Medicine

I begin this section with a brief mention of Isleño religion. Since a significant part of curing overlaps with the supernatural and since the most dramatic aspects of Isleño folk medicine are of a magico-religious nature, discussion of this topic should begin with some information about the religious beliefs of the Islenos. Almost all Islenos of the lower parish are nominally Roman Catholic. Catholicism is a very large part of the ethnic awareness of the Islenos. Illustrative of this is the fact that the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society of St. Bernard chose a solemn mass at St. Louis Cathedral to celebrate the "Bicentennial of the Canary Islanders Settlement in St. Bernard Parish and the Birthday of their First Commandant, Pierre Phillippe de Marigny," on June 15, 1978. The St. Bernard Church was established in 1787, making it the first ecclesiastical parish located below New Orleans. The church, which serves the majority of water Islenos of the lower Parish, is appropriately named San Pedro Pescador -- St. Peter the Fisherman -- a name which combines religion, a major adaptive strategy to cope with the environment, and Hispanism.

The present pastor of San Pedro (May 1982) is Father Roch Naquin. He told me that he can identify with the cultural festivals of the Islenos since he has seem similar events in the Cajun country where he was born and raised. He has an intense interest in Spanish being taught to area residents. He spoke about hoping to have priests from the Latin American Apostolate come to Delacroix Island. He is also interested in having mass said in Spanish one day a week. He believes that this will mean a lot to the people. This year (1981), the Spanish Club held their beauty contest in conjunction with

a fair on the grounds and in the basement of the church. The church is a popular meeting place and center for Isleño activities.

Although there have been attempts to establish Protestant congregations at Yscloskey and Delacroix Island and buildings dedicated to Protestant worship are found there, informants state that the congregations are small and pose a scant challenge to the Catholic identify of the Islenos. Some conversions to other, more fundamentalist, Protestant congregations did occur in the past. I listened to a tape of a conversation with a now-deceased Isleño. He recounted how he and a man from Mississippi went into partnership to make whiskey. They built a still and were making about fifty gallons of whiskey a day when the partner "got converted to the Holy Rollers" (a fundamentalist evangelical group which had pitched a tent at Reggio). He became born again and began to repent his misdeeds. He felt that he had to confess to people about all the harm that he had done them. This included making whiskey. His partner told him to leave him out of it when he confessed. However, even the Isleño became converted for a time, but it "didn't take".

Roman Catholic symbolism is noticeable in Isleño homes. In almost every home, a crucifix or religious picture is prominently displayed.

Father Kammer's study, which partially dealt with Islenos, mentions that lack of a full-time priest in the lower Parish made mass attendance difficult. San Pedro's was the only church below New Orleans for many years. A chapel at Delacroix Island was periodically destroyed by hurricanes and rebuilt until Betsy ended the succession of churches built there. With the decline of the sugar plantations along Terre-aux-Boeufs, the Parish seat was established in Violet at our Lady of Lourdes. Consequently, San Pedro became a mission. The lower settlements were occasionally visited by a priest who resided at Violet. (Baudier, in Kammer, 1941:48) Apparently,

religious fervor waned as a result of this isolation. Kammer stated: "It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the practice of religion had fallen to a low ebb. In general, the people believe in God and prayer of a sort, but many feel that attendance at Mass is not necessary. This attitude is found especially among men." (Kammer, 1941:49) Kammer later explains why economic exigencies demand the application of male labor every day of the week. (Kammer, 1941:54) Fishing, shrimping, and trapping have to be pursued constantly. If the shrimp are running, the Isleño is likely to stay out after them and not stop to come into Mass. My own scant observations on religious observances indicate that men still do not attend church as much as women but they do attend more often than when Kammer reported on the situation.

The "Blessings of the Fleets" which are held throughout southern Louisiana and the Gulf Coast are public displays of religious association. These occasions combine festivities, which appeal to residents and visitors, with a religious focus. Shrimp boats pass in line before a bridge or wharf where a priest, and in some cases, a bishop, blesses them with holy water. Prizes are awarded for the most attractively decorated boat. Food booths, selling gumbo and boiled shrimp, and bars, do a prodigious business. One or more bands play music for dancers of all ages. Usually a queen is chosen and crowned. At Delacroix Island last year (1981), the fleet was blessed by the Archbishop of New Orleans, Philip Hannan. Father Naquin assisted the archbishop in the blessing.

> Albert Avenel of Delacroix, president of San Pedro's Improvement Association, said money donated by fishermen during the blessing is used for maintenance work at the church. (Cannizaro, 1981:13)

A twenty-thousand dollar roof has been put on the church. This money

was raised by boat blessings.

One custom which came into being during World War II is a rather remarkable kind of Way of the Cross. This Catholic Lenten service usually consists of individuals or a whole congregation reciting prayers and singing hymns, marking each of the fourteen "stations" or incidents of the Passion of Jesus. The Isleño Good Friday observance consists of people walking, from Yscloskey and Delacroix Island, respectively, to San Pedro Church at Reggio. Each party carries a large cross made of two-by-four inch boards and the prayers are said at points along the way. This outdoor version of the Way of the Cross is perhaps more appropriate to the general Isleño character than the indoor version which is observed by most Catholics.

Another item of religious association is the popularity of Freemasonry among the Isleños. Macurdy noted in his 1950 monograph that membership in the Cervantes Lodge was popular during his research period. Today, one can see the Masonic Square and Compass plaque alongside statues and pictures of Catholic saints in Isleño homes.

Folk Medicine

Isleño folk curing techniques and remedies comprise both empirical remedies and actions that can be classified within the religious realm. Among the most dramatic of the latter type is the process of "getting the sun out". I have spoken to two ladies at the Island who can perform this ritual, as well as the daughter of another woman at Yscloskey who observed it many times. One woman told me that she was taught the method of curing when she was 48 years old. (She is now 70.) The symptoms for which the remedy is efficacious are: bad headache, irritated and painful eyes, pain

in the neck and back of the head, and high fever. Her method ties in with other descriptions I have recorded. She takes a small jar, such as a baby-food jar, or mustard jar, and fills it with water. A face towel is folded into quarters and secured over the mouth of the jar with a rubber band. She turns the jar over so that the cloth-covered mouth of the jar is pressed against the patient's head. She then says two prayers. Frequently, people being treated get very drowsy and even pass out. The results are immediate. "The heat is pulled out of the face", she says. Many people come to her for this treatment mainly in the summertime. She receives no pay for this nor does she want any thanks. "When someone wants to thank me, I tell them to thank God. He is the one doing this." The prayers that she says are secret and will be passed on when she is ready to retire or feels that death is imminent. In her case, she has chosen her own daughter,"who is very religious", to receive the gift of curing.

This curer says that she is unconcerned with the demands on her time that curing entails. When people come to her, they sometimes say they hate to bother her. She always answers that it is not a bother. One man bought her a cake after being cured, but she was upset by this. She definitely does not want any reward for her work.

She just puts her hand on someone's head to see if they have the "sun in it." It is a special part of the head. She can not turn a person down and has never refused anyone who asked for treatment. One informant said that a local physician even referred his own patients to folk curers.

Another woman described how her mother cured sunstroke. Essentially, she related the same procedure described above, but made no mention of the cloth. She told me that the water would bubble for about an hour. At the end of that time, the sunstroke would be gone. "No more sun in the scalp."

The prayer was secret and her own mother never revealed it to her. She always said the prayer under her breath.

I interviewed several people who were regular patients of such curers. One woman in her fifties told me that she had a theory about sun illness. "The heat gets trapped between the scalp and the skull. This causes illness and this must be taken out." In September of 1981, I spoke to a man in his mid-thirties who had had the sun taken out the previous day. He had headaches, nausea, sore throat, and fever. He was cured the same day. He believes that the ability to cure sunstroke is a great gift. He also had a burning in his eyes, just as if there were sand in them. The curer prayed over him and he was relieved. His nine-year-old son went three times and was cured from an illness that a physician had diagnosed as hepatitis. This child also made the jar of water dry. This "drying up the bottle" is a sure sign that the illness is of unusual severity. Another young man told me that he has the sun taken out every year. He is a heavy-equipment mechanic and his work requires that he stay out in the sun every day. He requests the cure for specific illnesses, as well as a preventive measure.

The one other instance of prayer being used for curing that I encountered, was the story of a lady at Yscloskey who was able to cure poison ivy by praying over it.

There is also a category of curing that entails pulling out the illness. This might also be applied to "sun sickness". I heard about several men who were able to cure sunstroke by "popping" the scalp. These curers would seize a lock of the patient's hair, wrap it around a forefinger, and give it a yank which would literally pull the scalp away from the skull. This supposedly would take the sun out of the victim. Another aspect of this pulling out of illness was the case of an adolescent boy who had

severe stomach pains. His family physician suggested that he go to the hospital and have a G.I. Series of X-rays. His mother decided to take him to a curer first. This specialist, a man, pulled the skin on the back of her son, near the waist, "He pinched the skin and popped it." Then the curer gave the boy castor oil and he was cured. This same lady told me that, when she was a child, she had Bell's Palsy. A curer prayed over her for nine days and she recovered.

There is a large folk category of sun-caused illnesses. Aside from what appears to be heat stroke, illnesses which might be classified as influenza, ulcers, and hepatitis are all attributed to the sun. It appears that the sun is an inimical agent, an oppressive symbol, to the Islenos. I can personally attest to the enervating weakness caused by working strenuously in the Delta midsummer heat and I can sympathize with people who are committed to fish and shrimp in such heat, which is further fortified by glare from the water.

The curing so far discussed is very similar to the methods of the traiteur in French Louisiana. The use of prayer, not charging money for the cure, the healer's own faith in his powers, the idea that their power or knowledge is a gift from God, and the specialization of treatment, are all factors mentioned in reference to the traiteur. Father Kammer met eight traiteurs in his study of marsh dwellers in St. Bernard, Jefferson, Plaquemines, and Lafourche Parishes. He described the use of a glass of water inverted on the head of the patient to take out sunstroke. "In Buras and the vicinity (the west bank of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish) water from the middle of the river is especially efficacious." (Kammer, 1941:141,143) What is remarkable is that Kammer's study was carried out at a time when the Islenos and other water people of the Delta were

considerably more isolated than they are today. Now, there is relatively easy access to clinics and hospitals in Chalmette and New Orleans. Yet, the reputations of such curers are revered and their powers continue to be applied. They do not seem to lack for patients. The lore is still being passed on to younger generations. I suggest that such perpetuation of folk medical lore, besides being evidence of vital elements in traditional lore, is further indication of the persistence of the ethnic networks through which such lore is transmitted.

I have listed other remedies which do not have a religious component. Most of these fall under the classification of home remedies, that is, they are not restricted to any special practicioner, but rather are the common lore of the whole community and they were and are readily passed on to anyone who is receptive to using them.

- For a nail in the foot, place tobacco on it.
- For a cold, drink an infusion of lemon, honey and paragoric. A variant of this includes adding the yolk of an egg to the mixture.
- For loss of hair, take the rind of a coconut (the inner shell that adheres to the meat), grind it up, mix it with vaseline, heat and apply to the scalp. This will restore hair.
- For sunstroke, put cockleberry leaves in a hat. A variant is placing elderberry leaves in a hat. An informant told me that his father would never go into the sun without putting leaves in his hat.
- For high fever, rub the patient down with vinegar.
- For a congested chest, drink a hot tea made from the leaves of the orange tree.
- For pneumonia, rub turpentine and olive oil on the chest.
- For swollen eyes from sea nettles, bathe them with potato water. That is, slice potatoes in water, add ice cubes and soak a cloth in this. Apply this cloth to the eyes. This is also good for flash burns from welding as well as for pinkeye.
- For foreign objects in the eyes, for instance a piece of steel, pour castor oil in them.

- To "purify the blood", collect a wild plant called nalga. "This means 'hip' in Spanish." This is a waxy plant which should be washed and put in lemonade.

- For snakebite: Mrs. Frank Campo of Shell Beach told me that she saw a child bitten on the hand by a poisonous snake. The father of the child got a live chicken, wrung its neck, cut it in two, removed the entrails, and placed half of the chicken on the bite. It was tied on with a towel. This "drew the poison out". Perhaps this could be interpreted as a form of sacrifice and might be ambiguously placed between empirical and magico-religious curing.

- Another snakebite remedy is to fry an egg, let it cool a bit, and place if over the bite.

- For upset stomach and diarrhea, drink a tea made from bay leaf.

- For anaemia, drink a tea made from rusty nails.

- For a cold, take orange peel, egg yolk, whiskey and lemon.

- For a cold, take cockleberry leaves, boil, and make into a plaster for the chest.

- For sunstroke, place a cow's tongue in vinegar, then place on the patient's head.

- For toothache, take tobacco and whiskey.

- For swollen glands in the neck rub with an ointment made of crushed garlic and lard.

- For a crippled dog, make a bed of maypops. Let him sleep on this for a few days and he will recover.

- For an abscess on the gum, or sore tooth, split a raw, red bean and apply. A variant is to split a raisin.

- For a cold, use Vick's Salve and honey. Either eat this or melt it and drink. (Vick's Salve was an Isleno standby patent medicine.)

Omens and Witches

The term bruja, usually translated as witch, is a quite different concept from the witch as it is usually perceived in social anthropological studies. That is, an antisocial member of the community who takes the brunt of hostility and blame for misfortune, or a person who stands in a

patterned relationship to another which is permanently or situationally hostile. As far as I am able to discern, the Islenos do not believe in individuals who possess malign supernatural powers. This would be contrary to their ethos of equality. Rather, brujas are conceived of as female supernatural beings, who harrass individuals. My impression is that this belief is found among the older generations and very few younger people accept it. Some say that the brujas came from Spain. They are nocturnal creatures who have to disappear before daylight.

Older members of the community assure me that there was, and is, a strong belief in omens of death. Several examples come to mind. One lady saw an apparition that informed her of her husband's death. The next day her husband died.

A man told me about an omen of death that made a tremendous impression on him when he was young. He said that he, his uncle, and his father went out to fish. They got as far as Catfish Pass when suddenly a big boat appeared in front of them out of nowhere.

> I warned the old man and he jumped up, but there was nothing there, it was just an illusion. All three of us saw it. The old man said: "We'll work for a little while and then go home." When we got home, my uncle told me that I could drive the ladies to town for a shopping trip. I took the ladies, my mother and aunt, and, when I returned home, my daddy told me: "Miguel just died."

The narrator has always recognized the phantom boat appearing on a cloudless day as being an omen of his uncle's death.

Tales abound about spectral lights that appear in the marsh at night or at Fort Proctor, near Shell Beach. The appearance of this light is believed to presage a death or crisis in the community. One fascinating tale told me by an eighty-seven-year-old lady from Delacroix Island, concerned something that happened to her mother when she was a small child. A bright

light with a blue tail hit her mother and she dropped as if dead. She stayed in a coma for three days. This particular light was associated with the spirit of a dead man who had buried money near the Island. He came back to haunt his grave. His ghost was finally put to rest by saying Mass and burning candles near his grave. This informant also saw the light again when she was thirteen. Another man told me that he had seen the light at Fort Proctor when he was a child. He believes that the light seen by the lady was the same thing, even though Fort Proctor is far removed from the Island. He also believes that it was a ghost, but, according to him, it is no longer seen at Shell Beach. (Possibly because there are no longer people living at Shell Beach to observe it.)

One perceptive older Isleno opines that "superstitions" (his category) are connected to the lifestyle of the Islenos. The Isleno would never leave home after sunrise. He would be considered lazy if he did so. People are expected to get up early in the morning and get about their tasks in the marsh well before daylight. Effective hunting, fishing and shrimping all require an early start. People travelling in the marsh in the darkness see many things -- shooting stars, strange lights -- they hear strange sounds. Consequently, living close to nature and often being alone in the wild would predispose them to accept omens.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I present an overview of the more salient "reciprocal relations" that together give us an ecological framework from which to look at the information we have covered. As a reminder, we should note that ecology is not the "natural world", as some so-called ecological groups maintain. Certainly environment plays a part in this discussion; but other forces far beyond the marsh, indeed, far from the environs of Louisiana, affect the Isleños, now as in the past.

In the following diagrams, I have tried to point out those factors that seem to be most relevant to the inhabitants of lower St. Bernard Parish. At the outset, it is apparent that political and economic forces not under the control of these inhabitants are important factors in their cultural and historical ecology. For example, I would suggest that Spanish colonial policy in the 18th century is a factor that is part of the assemblage of components that comprise Isleño ecology. In the same vein, legislation concerning trapping and immigration are as important as three-cornered grass in their adaptation. Many studies have treated societies as if they were isolates that were out of contact with larger institutional systems. "Hence in such cases, the study of the role of powerful forces external to these communities in molding their use and abuse of environment has not been considered." (Netting, 1977:88-89)

I have separated the pertinent components into three groups. Ultimately, they all interrelate, but for convenience I have presented them in a chronological, geomorphological, and ethnographic sequence.

A European colonial overlordship was the pre-adaptation for Isleño migration to Louisiana. It was not only Spanish colonial policy that determined the settlement of Canarians in Louisiana, but Spanish colonialism in interaction with British imperial plans. Out of this tension grew the rationale for Gálvez's settlement of Islenos in St. Bernard and other places. Two factors that stimulated each other were: the overpopulation of the Canary Islands with the ongoing Spanish policy of demanding emigration, and the underpopulation of Louisiana and the failure to implement a settlement policy during the French regime.

When the Isleños arrived in St. Bernard, they initially adapted to the higher ground. Some of them persisted in this strategy for two hundred years. The granulation of sugar, and market reverberations of a global nature made potential sugar cultivation extremely profitable for those who could accumulate the capital for slaves, land, and transportation. In the early 19th century, a sugar plantation system was already underway in St. Bernard Parish. This system apparently attracted larger entrepreneurs and squeezed out smaller people. I am not certain of the population dynamics operating then. It is not unlikely that small farmers with large families could not compete with the larger operators. This would set up a possibility for some of the offspring of a larger family to seek employment either outside of the Parish or to explore the alternative of the marsh adaptation, which probably was always a relatively profitable one. Thus, those with meager capital went into the marsh where their numbers were reinforced and their Hispanism perpetuated with a constant flow of immigrants from the Canary Islands and other parts of Spain. Those who stayed behind on the high ground either persisted as small farmers or adapted to the plantation system and became indistinguishable from the other rural Creole aristocracy of antebellum

southern Louisiana. Thus, the category of Tornero evolved.

After the Civil War, most of the plantations declined. The Parish horticulture reverted to small truck farms and a new land use pattern began to emerge. After World War I, residential development accelerated.

The interrelationships of natural and human-affected environment had a presence in the marshland as well as on the high ground. Before human intervention, Gulf and riverine forces interdigitated and created a process of wandering deltaic plains and marshes. With human harnessing of the Mississippi River, at first through levees, and subsequently by means of jetties at the mouth of the river, there occurred a cessation of overflow and sedimentation that enriched the marshland and made its brackish waters a habitat for so many species. This human manipulation was further accelerated with the petroleum industry's exploration and channeling of the marsh. Canals, it is maintained by the Isleños, further increased the erosion of the marshland and allowed the inter-penetration of salt water. Salt water and pollution affected the vegetation and altered the muskrat population upon which the marshdwellers rely for income.

The oil industry represents a far-removed force which has played a part in all our lives. The maneuvering of OPEC nations with industrialized nations ultimately reverberates to the St. Bernard Parish marshes. Such has economic interdependence been since the origin of the state; however, with the development of industrialized economies which have depended upon fossil fuels, this interdependence has accelerated and become much more intense. The foreign policy of the United States vis-a-vis the Middle Eastern oil producing countries, places the federal government in a relationship with the Isleños. But influences of outside are nothing new.

The ethnographic components of Isleño marsh adaptation connect with the preceding data in that the origins and cultural identity of the Islenos are all affected by such factors as immigration laws, bureaucratic directives and legislation, such as those concerning the MRGO. Yet, on a smaller scale, Isleño ethnicity is related to a narrower scope of interrelationships. Isolation, economic pursuits, and endogamy create a somewhat detached population in which cultural symbols have circulated with a certain degree of intensity. With the decline of Hispanism, the prerequesites for a revival movement were present. An intensely interacting group, aware of what they had and what they had lost, is fallow soil for the cultivation of nostalgic and energetic forces such as are usually part of an ethnic revival movement. I suggest that the National Park Service's decision to document the Isleno is also part of their ethnic revival. This report will probably reinforce awareness of ethnicity if even one person reads it.

Although the components of Part III of the ecological schema generally deal with internal relations of the Islenos, there is one factor which has always bridged the gulf between the Islenos and the wider society. This is the market. The market is a major component of the ecosystem. Indeed, it could be argued that the market is a distillation of a much vaster system than is sketched here. The terms, supply and demand, are a simple way of designating a protean array of factors that inter-relate and have constantly affected the fortunes of the Islenos. Rather than "children of nature", as Fortier called them, it is less romantic, but perhaps more apt to see them as always having been part of a regional, international, and today, a global economic system.

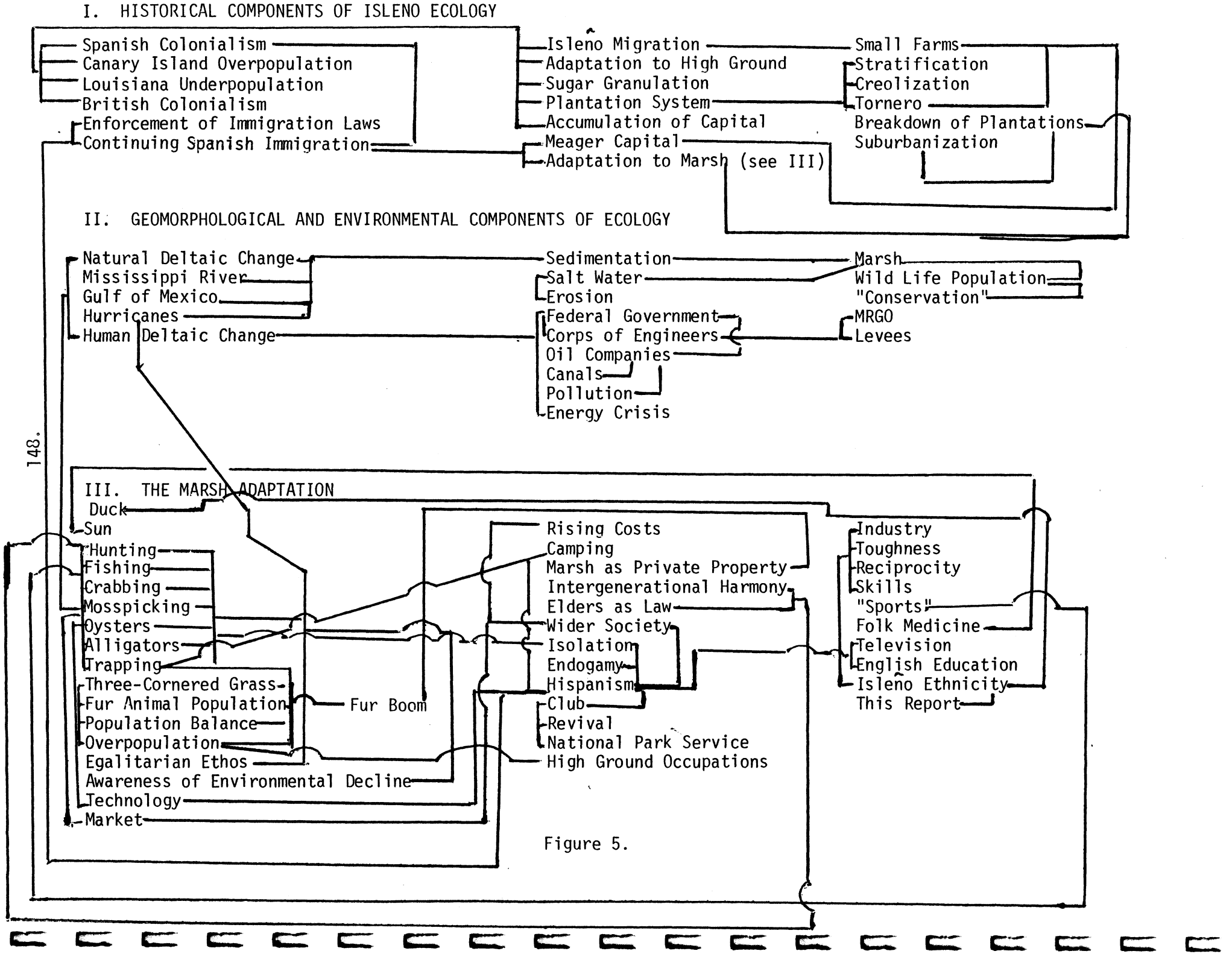
I. HISTORICAL COMPONENTS OF ISLEÑO ECOLOGY
Spanish Colonialism
Canary Island Overpopulation
Louisiana Underpopulation
British Colonialism
Enforcement of Immigration Laws
Continuing Spanish Immigration
Isleño Migration
Adaptation to High Ground
Sugar Granulation
Plantation System
Accumulation of Capital
Meager Capital
Adaptation to Marsh (see III)
Small Farms
Stratification
Creolization
Tornero
Breakdown of Plantations
Suburbanization
II. GEOMORPHOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMPONENTS OF ECOLOGY
Natural Deltaic Change
Mississippi River
Gulf of Mexico
Hurricanes
Human Deltaic Change
Sedimentation
Salt Water
Erosion
Federal Government
Corps of Engineers
Oil Companies
Canals
Pollution
Energy Crisis
Marsh
Wild Life Population
"Conservation"
MRGO
Levees
III. THE MARSH ADAPTATION
Duck
Sun
Hunting
Fishing
Crabbing
Mosspicking
Oysters
Alligators
Trapping
Three-Cornered Grass
Fur Animal Population
Population Balance
Overpopulation
Egalitarian Ethos
Awareness of Environmental Decline
Technology
Market
Fur Boom
Rising Costs
Camping
Marsh as Private Property
Intergenerational Harmony
Elders as Law
Wider Society
Isolation
Endogamy
Hispanism
Club
Revival
National Park Service
High Ground Occupations
Industry
Toughness
Reciprocity
Skills
"Sports"
Folk Medicine
Television
English Education
Isleño Ethnicity
This Report

Figure 5.

AFTERWORD

Future Research

As mentioned in the introduction, my informants in this research ranged in age from 11 to 91 years. Because of time limitations, I tried to cover as many aspects of Isleño life as possible, taking, as it were, a scattergun approach. Much more detailed, in-depth investigation must be carried out. As a priority, I propose to concentrate on interviewing the older members of the population. These valuable resources were not given enough concentration in the initial aspects of this report.

I would like to quantify my hypothesis concerning limitation of population by more precise surveys and utilization of census reports. Further work should be done on all aspects of the economy, in particular, on the mechanisms of making choices and the lore and information networks that pertain to fishing and shrimping. Much more needs to be done on kinship. This is probably the most time-consuming aspect of ethnographic research. I need to secure more life histories and genealogies as well as to make a detailed investigation into marriage and divorce in the past and today.

All decisions and activities of the Club should be monitored in order to keep a close watch on the efforts of revival. Also, traditional and contemporary political processes need to be investigated.

The suburbanization of St. Bernard Parish will probably increase in the near future. Judge Perez Drive, the main thoroughfare of the Parish, has been extended to Poydras. Paving on the route to Reggio will soon begin. In a few years, it is conceivable that Delacroix and Yscloskey will be merely extensions of urban New Orleans. Observing this and the changes that will occur in Isleno society in the future will occupy much of my time in years to come.

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Villere, Louis
1972 The Canary Island Migration to Louisiana, 1778-1783: The History and Passenger Lists of the Islenos Volunteer Recruits and Their Families. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co.

Wilson, Austin
1969 End of the World. New Orleans Magazine 3:23.

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE ISLEÑOS

Accompanying the Report:

Masters of the Marsh: An Introduction to the Ethnography of the Isleños of Lower St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana

by

Joseph Valsin Guillotte, III

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Part I. PRIMARY SOURCES

The material in this section of the bibliography deals with sources that specifically relate to the Isleños either exclusively or in the context of original research. Essentially this falls within categories of social and cultural research. This section of the bibliography is the most meager due to the paucity of folkloristic, linguistic, sociological, and anthropological research on the Isleños. One element in common to all of these sources is that the authors did field research in St. Bernard Parish and actually spoke to the Isleños, and participated to some degree in their lifestyle.

Armistead, Samuel G.

1978 "Romances tradicionales entre los hispano-hablantes del Estado de Luisiana." Nueva Revista de Filogia Hispanica, 37:39-56.

1981 "Hispanic Folk Literature Among the Islenos." Perspectives on Ethnicity in New Orleans, 4:21-31.

ND "That Was a Lost Country: Spanish Dialect Texts from St. Bernard Parish." Unpublished manuscript.

ND "Spanish Language and Folklore in Louisiana." Unpublished manuscript.

Armistead is one of the pioneers of linguistic and folkloristic research among Louisiana Islenos. He has made three trips to St. Bernard Parish and contemplates another. He has also done research in the Donaldsonville area among the remnants of the brulee Islenos and plans to study Spanish-speaking populations near Natchitoches. He has carried on some of McCurdy's work in recording décimas and writing analytically about the dialect of Spanish spoken in St. Bernard Parish. He is currently working on a comprehensive overview of language and oral literature of the St. Bernard Islenos.

Cannizaro, Steve

1981 "Fleet Blessed: Amen, Revelers Say." The Times-Picayune/ States-Item, July 27, 1981.

An account of the 1981 blessing of the shrimp fleet at Delacroix Island. This brief article gives some insight into relations between the Catholic Church and the Islenos.

Claudel, Alice Moser

1958 "The Use of Traditions in Teaching." Louisiana Schools, 36:2.

1965 "Interest Creates Art." Louisiana Schools, 42:2

Mrs. Claudel taught at the Delacroix Island School for several years. Her appreciation of the ethnicity of the children is noteworthy. Her 1965 article includes drawings of ducks by her students which are interesting from the point of view taken by the author that the duck is an Isleno symbol.

Claudel, Calvin

1945 "Spanish Folklore from Delacroix Island." Journal of American Folklore, 58:209-224.

Professor Claudel is the husband of Alice Moser Claudel and so has had a connection with Delacroix and Islenos. Although noted for his works on Louisiana French folklore, he is a resident of St. Bernard Parish and has done historical and folkloristic research there as well as in southwest Louisiana.

Duchein, Annette

1931 "Picturesque Spanish Colony Thrives in St. Bernard Parish." The Times-Picayune, September 6.

An interesting description of the lower Parish.

Fortier, Alcee

1894 Louisiana Studies.

In Chapter 2, I have given a detailed analysis of Fortier's trips to St. Bernard Parish and his observations.

Golliher, Jeffrey Mark (with additional comments by Nicholas R. Spitzer)

1980 "The Islenos, Louisiana's Canary Islanders." in Mississippi Delta Ethnographic Overview, Report for the National Park Service by the National Council for the Traditional Arts, Joseph T. Wilson, Executive Director, Nicholas R. Spitzer, Project Director. p. 177.

A brief precis of Isleño history, folklore, and economic adaptation. The photographs are handsome documents of contemporary Isleno life. Spitzer has recorded and translated Irvan Perez's décima which might be considered a primary mythic document by one of the population's most accomplished bricoleurs and artists.

Guillotte, III, Joseph Valsin

1981 "The Islenos of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana: A Report on Work in Progress." A paper presented at a symposium: Spanish Colonization in the Southeast. Southern Anthropological Society, Fort Worth, April 4.

1981 "Isleño Market Hunting in St. Bernard Parish: A Bygone Occupation with Newly Revitalized Elements." Paper presented to the Louisiana Folklore Society. New Orleans, May 1.

Guillotte, III, Joseph Valsin (continued)

1981 "Isleño Revival." Perspectives on Ethnicity in in New Orleans, 4:16-20.

1982 Masters of the Marsh: An Introduction to the Ethnography of the Islenos of Lower St. Bernard Parish, a report for the National Park Service.

1982 "Language, Death, and Cultural Revival Among the Islenos of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana." A paper presented at the Southern Anthropological Society, Boone, North Carolina, April.

The report for the National Park Service includes most of the material in the other papers and articles. The orientation is cultural/ecological. Descriptions of the environment, historical background, traditional occupations, social relations, values and some items on handicraft and folk medicine are covered. The author has been collaborating with Samuel G. Armistead on the gathering of some of the data.

Hawley, Francis Frederick

1976 "Spanish Folk Healing in Ascension Parish, Louisiana." M. A. Thesis, Louisiana State University.

This interesting and well-organized thesis is the product of field work among the brulee Islenos around Donaldsonville. There are comparisons and contrasts with the marsh Islenos. For example, there were similar processes of large plantations expanding at the expense of small yeomen such as among first Islenos in St. Bernard. There were also similarities of adaptation of a collector's economy in both places. However, the St. Bernard Islenos had the marsh and bountiful Gulf which not only isolated them but helped to sustain their communities and ethnicity.

Hearn, Lafcadio

1887 "A Lacustrine Village," Harpers, 27:

Drawings of the Filipino settlement of St. Malo which is still part of Shell Beach and Yscloskey lore. The sketches provide a view of housetypes as well as other artifacts.

Hutcheson, Jua Nyla

1976 "Los Islenos." The Times-Picayune, July 4, 1976

An article which notes the early attempt to organize the Club and recognition of the identify of the Islenos.

Isenogle, Jim

1981 "Isleños: Descendents of Canary Islanders in South Louisiana." New Orleans Internacional.

A brief sketch of the history of the St. Bernard Islenos with some décima information.

Kaltenbaugh, Louise Pauline

1970 "A Study of the Place-Names of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana." M. A. Thesis, Louisiana State University in New Orleans.

This thesis gives some historical background to St. Bernard Parish settlement, including the Isleños' contributions. Many of the marsh area place-names are reported and analyzed. A good introduction to the study of St. Bernard Parish.

Kammer, Edward J.

1941 A Socio-Economic Survey of the Marsh-Dwellers of Four Southeastern Louisiana Parishes. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press.

Father Kammer looks at historical background, religion, social relations, and particularly, economy, in this sociological study of fishermen and trappers in St. Bernard, Jefferson, Lafourche, and Plaquemines Parishes. He used a questionnaire approach as a rule, but he obviously developed rapport with his informants and a feeling for the marsh life. A pioneering study which should be made more widely available for students of Louisiana.

Kane, Harnett

1944 Deep Delta Country. New York: Doubleday.

Kane's background was essentially journalistic. His works are popular and well-researched, although, at times,perhaps a bit overly dramatic. Yet he is one of the most knowledgeable sources of information on southern Louisiana. Part of this work deals with Isleño history, mainly deriving from Pritchard, but is valuable for firsthand interviews and a description of Delacroix during the fur boom, with a good historical analysis of the ensuing conflicts over trapping lands.

Kemp, John R.

1979 "The Isleños: A Fight for Survival of a Culture at Delacroix Island." The Times-Picayune, July 19.

1979 "The Décima Singer." The Times-Picayune, July 19.

Good reportage on the Island and folk art.

Marques de Casa Mena, Jose Montero de Pedro

1979 Espanoles en Nueva Orleans y Luisiana. Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica del Centro Iberoamericanica de Cooperacion.

Although mainly a Spanish language historical account of Spanish involvement in Louisiana, it is also a primary source in that the Marques de Casa Mena had contact with the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society and interviewed many of its members.

McCurdy, Raymond R.

1947 "Un Romance Tradicional Recogida en Luisiana: Las Senas del Marido." Revista Hispanica Moderna, 13:164-166.

1948 "Spanish Riddles from St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana." Southern Folklore Quarterly, 12:129-135.

1949 "Spanish Folklore from St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana."
1952 Southern Folklore Quarterly, 13:180-191; 16:227-250.

1950 The Spanish Dialect in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

1959 "A Spanish Word-List of the 'Brulis' Dwellers of Louisiana." Hispania, 42:547-554.

1975 "Los Islenos de la Luisiana: Supervivencia de la lengua y Folklore canarios." Anuarion de Estudios Atlanticos, 21:471-591.

McCurdy is the pioneer language and oral literature scholar to study St. Bernard Parish Islenos. He is still remembered by some of the older people at the Island. His works are essential for any person interested in language and socio-linguistic study.

Parenton, Vernon J.

1938 "A Sociological Study of a Negro Village in the French Section of Louisiana." M. A. Thesis, L.S.U.

Cited by McCurdy. Ascension Parish study of a community near Brulee Islenos.

"Pescadoresville" The St. Bernard Eagle. March 16.
1882

Quinones, Mark Anthony

1955 "Delacroix Island: A Sociological Study of a Spanish Community." M. A. Thesis, Louisiana State University.

I have not yet been able to secure this thesis. I understand that it is based on survey techniques but also that the author resided at the Island for a short time. It should be valuable for material dealing with household composition and economic analysis including stratification information.

Varela, Beatriz

1978 "Observaciones sobre Los Isleños, Los Cubanos y la importancia del bilinguismo." New Orleans Ethnic Cultures, 1:63-68.

1979 "Isleño and Cuban Spanish." Perspectives on Ethnicity in New Orleans, 2:42-47.

Professor Varela has been observing the Isleño community in St. Bernard Parish for several years. These two articles are introductory essays on the historical background and language.

Wilson, Austin

1969 "End of the World." New Orleans Magazine, 3:23

This article about Delacroix Island is mainly an interview with Mr. Mack Melerine. It is valuable because it reveals a resident's awareness of population control by out-migration.

Part II. HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOURCES

Acosta, Antonio Rodriguez

1976 La Poblacion de Luisiana espaniola. Ph.D dissertation, University of Seville.

1976 "Problemas Economicas y rebelion popular en Luisiana en 1768." in La Rabida Actas del Primero Coloquio de Historia de los estados unidos: 131-146.

1981 "Overview of the Consumption of Food and Goods by Isleno Immigrants to Louisiana." Louisiana History, 22:299-306.

Rodriguez Acosta is a student of the Canarian historian, Morales Padron. His dissertation and derivative works are reputed to be some of the best demographic discussions of Spanish colonial Louisiana.

Bancroft, Hubert Howe

1883-1885 North Mexican States, 2 vols. San Francisco.

Mention of Islenos in San Antonio, Texas.

Baudier, Roger

1939 The Catholic Church in Louisiana.

Baudier includes historical information on the Islenos with specific data on the founding of the early churches in St. Bernard Parish.

Bolton, Herbert Eugene

1915 Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century. Berkeley.

Bourquard, Shirley Chaisson

1978 "Miscellaneous Marriage Licenses and Certificates, Parish of St. Bernard." L'Heritage, 1:143.

1978 "Marriage Books I -- St. Bernard Parish, 25th Judicial District Court. L'Heritage, 1:308.

1979 "Terre aux Boeufs Cemetary." L'Heritage, 2:165.

L'Heritage is the publication of the St. Bernard Genealogical Society. The above articles pertain to marriages and deaths and are valuable for pursuing details on marriage patterns.

Campbell, Marie Pilkington

1975 "Galveztown (Galvez Town) La Villa de Galvez." New Orleans Genesis, 19:227-230.

Genealogical information on unsuccessful colony of Islenos in Iberville Parish. (See Scramuzza).

Casey, Powell A.

1971 "Excerpts from Volume IX, 'The Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812' by Clarence Edwin Carter." Submitted by P. A. Casey. The Louisiana Genealogical Register, 18:170-176.

Militia and civil appointments.

Chalona, Alice R.

1979 "Oath of Allegience of the United States of America in the State of Louisiana." L'Heritage, 2:226-229.

1979 "Marriages and Deaths from St. Bernard Newspapers, 1888-1900." L'Heritage, 2:245.

Additional data on marriage patterns.

Chambers, Henry A.

1925 A History of Louisiana: Wilderness-Colony-Province-Territory-State-People. Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc.

Scant mention of early history of Islenos in a secondary source.

Claudel, Calvin

1941 "Tombs of Historical Interest in the St. Bernard Cemetery." The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 24:353-359.

A description of the oldest cemetery in the Isleño neighborhood and burial place of many who were reared in the lower Parish.

Critini, Margarite Fernandez

1978 "Our Spanish Familia." L'Heritage, 1:31-32.

Historical background on the Islenos by one of the Club's supporters.

Davies, Joseph James Jr.

1948 "The Development of Public Education in St. Bernard Parish since 1877." M. A. Thesis, Tulane University.

Charts the history of public schools in Isleño territory and should be useful for further study on isolating effects of lack of public education on the retention of Isleno ethnicity.

Davis, Edwin Adams

1961 Louisiana: A Narrative History. Baton Rouge, Claitor's Book Store.

Again, a scant mention of the Islenos.

1968 Louisiana, Its Horn of Plenty: The Resources of a Great State. Alexandria: Panoramic Teaching Aids, Inc.

Really, a secondary-school-level economic geography but does contain information on trapping, shrimping.

Davis, Ellis Arthur

ND The Historical Encyclopedia of Louisiana. Historical Bureau.

Some background to the Islenos economic life.

Dawson, Joseph G. III

1977 "General Lowell H. Rousseau and Louisiana Reconstruction." Louisiana History, 20:373-391

Mention of some Isleño politicians in disturbances in St. Bernard.

Din, Gilbert C.

1972 "Early Spanish Colonization Efforts in Louisiana." Louisiana Studies, 11:40-42.

1975 "Spain's Immigration Policy and Efforts in Louisiana During the American Revolution." Louisiana Studies, 14:241-257.

1978 "Protecting the 'Barerra': Spanish Defenses in Louisiana 1763-1779. Louisiana History, 19:183-211.

1980 "Cimmarones and the San Malo Band in Spanish Louisiana." Louisiana History, 21:237-262.

Din is writing the historical portion of this project. The first three articles

Din, Gilbert C. (continued)

set the geopolitical background for the Isleño migration to Louisiana. The 1980 article describes the "rebellion" of runaway slaves whose depredations affected recently-arrived Isleños in St. Bernard Parish.

Forsyth, Alice D.

1978 "Notes on Some of the Canary Islanders Who Settled in Louisiana." L'Heritage, 1:88-268.

1979 "The Fourth Part of White Marriage of the City of Galveztown, 1786." L'Heritage, 2:65.

The 1978 article is especially interesting since it indicates the heterogeneity of the Canarian migration as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 4. The 1979 piece is relevant to the subsequently abandoned site on the confluence of the Amite River and Bayou Manchac.

Fortier, Alcee

1904 A History of Louisiana (four volumes). See Volume II. The Spanish Domination and the Cession to the United States, 1763-1803. New York: Manzi, Joyant and Company.

1914 (Edited by:) Louisiana: Comprising Sketches of Parishes, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons Arranged in Cyclopedic Form. Century Historical Association.

The second volume of Fortier's History of Louisiana gives a sketch of early Isleño events in St. Bernard Parish. The 1914 volume has some data on famous members of the Estopinal and Marrero families who were powerful political forces in St. Bernard.

Fortier, Lucille M. B.

1965 "Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Violet, Louisiana. Interment Records, 1787-1878." New Orleans Genesis. 4:319-325.

Genealogical information from the Parish Records of the oldest church in St. Bernard.

de Galvez, Bernardo

1978 Yo solo: The Battle Journal of Bernardo Galvez During the American Revolution. Translated by E. A. Montemayor. New Orleans: Polyanthos.

The Revolutionary War exploits of the Isleño patron and namesake of St. Bernard Parish.

Gayarre, Charles

1854 History of Louisiana -- The Spanish Dominion. New Orleans.

A general history of the state.

Glick, Robert D.

1972 The Old World Background of the Irrigation System of San Antonio, Texas. El Paso.

An examination of the Canarian origins of the San Antonio irrigation. Introduced by the Canarian population of San Antonio which predates the arrival of the St. Bernard Parish Islenos.

Gutierrez, Page

1980 "The Colonial Spanish in South Louisiana." in Mississippi Delta Ethnographic Overview. Report for the National Park Service by the National Council for the Traditional Arts. Joseph T. Wilson, Executive Director, Nicholas R. Spitzer, Project Director.

A brief overview of Spanish emigration to Louisiana before the American hegemony.

Hackett, D. L. A.

1973 "The Social Structure of Jacksonian Louisiana." Louisiana Studies, 12:324-353.

Some mention of the plantation economy of St. Bernard Parish.

Hansen, Harry, ed.

1971 Louisiana: A Guide to the State, New Revised Edition. N.Y.:Hastings House.

Brief mention of the Islenos and description of some sites in St. Bernard Parish.

Holmes, Jack D. L.

1967 "Dramatis Personae in Spanish Louisiana", Louisiana Studies, 6:149-185.

Biographical information on some of the people who were instrumental in the Isleño migration and settlement, especially Bouligny.

Hordes, Stanley M.

1980 "Sources for the History of the Islenos in Louisiana and Texas." Paper presented at the Cuarto Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana, Las Palmas, October.

See Section IV of this bibliography for more information on archival material. In this paper, Hordes decries the neglect given to Isleno historiography and introduces us to some of the more salient sources for historical research in Louisiana and Texas.

Hyland, William de Marigny

1978 "The Islenos of St. Bernard Parish." Pamphlet of the Spanish Heritage and Cultural Society of St. Bernard's Sponsorship of a Mass Commemorating the Bicentennial of the Canary Islanders' Settlement in St. Bernard Parish and the Birthday of Their First Commandant, Pierre Phillipe de Marigny. June 15, 1978.

This sketches the geopolitical background of the Galvez plan to settle the Islenos, with a brief description of their early years.

Maduell, Charles R. Jr.

ND Marriage Contracts, Wills and Testaments of the Spanish Colonial Period, 1770-1804.

Index of documents of colonial period.

Marchand, Sidney

1931 The Story of Ascension Parish. Donaldsonville: Marchand.

Information on Brulee Islenos studied by Hawley.

Morales Padron, Francisco

1951 "Colonas Canarios en Indios." Annuario de Estudios Americanos. 8:422-427.

1977 "Las Canarias y la policia emigratoria a Indias." Primer Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana. Las Palmas 211-291.

Morales Padron, himself a Canarian and professor of history at the University of Seville, is the foremost historical expert on Canarian history. Yet, he himself was unaware of the St. Bernard Islenos existence until a visit to the United States in 1979. At that time, he visited the Islenos Museum and was entertained by the Club.

Mugnier, George Francis

1975 Louisiana Images 1900-1920: A Photographic Essay. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Mugnier's photographs of rural Louisiana convey a sense of life at the end of the 19th century. Although it is not attributed to the St. Bernard region, there is a picture of a palmetto house of the type which Islenos used at the Island at the time of Fortier's visit.

Murvan, M. Maxwell

1980 "Land Owners and Families of Early St. Bernard Parish." New Orleans Genesis, 19:13.

Genealogical information as well as information on land tenure.

Pelayo, Mrs. Sidney Marion

1967 "Pelayo Lineage." New Orleans Genesis, 6:254.

Genealogical information of family with some Isleno connections.

Pitot, James

1979 Observations on the Colony of Louisiana from 1796 to 1802. Translated from the French with an introduction by Henry C. Pitot. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. Published for the Historic New Orleans Collection.

A mention of the Islenos newly settled in St. Bernard Parish.

Pollard, Mrs. Nora Lee

1977 "Ascension Church-Donaldsonville, Louisiana, 1824-1836." The Louisiana Genealogical Register, 24:39-46.

Some connections to Ascension Parish Isleno families.

Pritchard, Walter (ed.)

1941 "Some Interesting Glimpses of Louisiana a Century Ago. Reprinted from Weekly Picayune, October 22, 1838." Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 24:45-48.

Reprinting of an anonymous author's account of the Terre-aux-Boeufs Islenos and their interaction with the New Orleans produce market.

Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard Parishes, La.

1963 "History of Regional Growth of Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard Parishes."

Statistical information on St. Bernard.

Renaud, Marie Louise

1946 "The History of the Public Schools in St. Bernard Parish to 1879." M. A. Thesis, Tulane University.

Educational background to St. Bernard until latter part of the 19th century.

Scramuzza, V. M.

1930 "Galveztown, A Spanish Settlement of Colonial Louisiana." Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 13:553-609.

A description of the short-lived Isleño settlement on the confluence of the Amite River and Bayou Manchac. Graphic account of the trials of the colony with a prejudicial and patronizing attitude toward the Islenos.

Taylor, Joe Gray

1968 "New Orleans and Reconstruction." Louisiana History, 9:189-208.

A mention of events in St. Bernard which occasioned U. S. troops to intervene in affairs of the Parish.

Tornero Tinajero, Pablo

1980 "Canarian Immigration to America: The Civil-Military Expedition to Louisiana. 1777-1779." Louisiana History, 21:377-386.

Tornero is another student of Morales Padron. This article gives some of the background to the Galvez-planned Canarian migration.

Villere, Louis

1972 The Canary Islands Migration to Louisiana, 1778-1783: The History and Passenger Lists of the Isleno Volunteer Recruits and Their Families. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company

Valuable because it presents a list of names of the original Isleño settlers at Terre-aux-Boeufs. Villere has been criticized for not citing his sources. One Isleno told me that he was told by Villere that he got all of his information from Loyola University Rare Book Collection. The author recently died.

III. SOURCES ON ENVIRONMENT AND GEOMORPHOLOGY OF THE ISLEÑOS.

Bauman, R. H., R. Crisler, C. Kreitler

1978 "Coastal Plain of Southeast Texas and Louisiana," in A Field Guide Book for Louisiana, Richard H. Kesel and Robert A. Sauder, eds., Baton Rouge: Moran Industries.

A brief overview of the region in which the Islenos reside.

Becnel, Thomas A.

1962 "A History of the Louisiana Shrimp Industry, 1867-1961." M. A. Thesis, Louisiana State University.

General background to one of the Islenos' major economic pursuits.

Blaize, Frank and Dennis Gravelot

ND "Hunting and Trapping in Plaquemines Parish." in The Historical Encyclopedia of Louisiana. Louisiana Historical Bureau.

Brief introduction to recreational hunting and trapping in some of the marshland which the Islenos occupy.

Bonck, Juana Clair

1942 "Plant Succession on Abandoned Farmland in the Vicinity of New Orleans, Louisiana." M.S. Thesis. Tulane University.

Burk and Associates

1978 "St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana: Proposed Coastal Zone Land Use Regulations -- Prepared for the Parish of St. Bernard by Burk and Associates."

ND Louisiana Coastal Resources Atlas: St. Bernard Parish.

The atlas is excellent. Prepared by a local engineering firm.

Bureau of Governmental Research

1960 The Government of St. Bernard Parish. New Orleans.

A description of the police jury governmental structure of St. Bernard Parish.

Chabreck, Robert H.

1970 "Marsh Zones and Vegetative Types in the Louisiana Coastal Marshes." Dissertation, Louisiana State University.

Coastal Environments, Inc.

1972 Environmental Impact Study, Ship Channel Project.

1972 Environmental Baseline Study, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana.

1973 Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Study for the St. Bernard Parish Police Jury.

1976 Resource Management: The St. Bernard Parish Wetlands.

This consulting firm is managed by Sherwood Gagliano, the dean of Louisiana coastal geomorphologists. He is the acknowledged expert on the St. Bernard wetlands and one of the most articulate critics of the MRGO.

Emmer, Rod E. and Karen M. Wicker

1978 "Sedimentary Environments, Ecological Systems and Land Use in Southeastern Louisiana." in Kesel and Sauder.

Fontenot, Bennie J. Jr. and Howard E. Rogillo

1970 "A Study of Estuarine Sport Fishes in the Biloxi Marsh Complex, Louisiana." Baton Rouge: Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

A study of aquatic life in one of the Isleno trapping and fishing areas easily accessible from Shell Beach.

Gagliano, Sherwood M., Philip Light, and Ronald Becker

1972 "Hydrologic and Geologic Studies of Coastal Louisiana." L.S.U. Coastal Studies Institute, Department of Marine Science, Report #8, Baton Rouge.

1981 "Land Loss in the Mississippi River Deltaic Plain," Transactions -- Gulf Coast Association of Geological Sciences. 31:295-300.

More studies by Gagliano, et al. The 1981 article presents the most detailed analysis of the rate of land loss in St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes.

Kessel, Richard H., Sam B. Hilliard, William G. Haag

1978 "Lower Mississippi Valley." in Kessel and Sauder.

Kessel, Richard H. and Robert A. Sauder

1978 A Field Guidebook for Louisiana. Washington: The Association for American Geographers.

A collection of readable introductory articles on the physical geography of Louisana and the Texas coast.

Lowery, George H. Jr.

1974 The Mammals of Louisiana and its Adjacent Waters. Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press

The section on the muskrat is excellent in that it covers human and animal interaction.

Muller, Robert A.

1978 "Field Trip to West Delta Block 27 Gas Field." in Kessel and Sauder.

Newton, Milton B. Jr.

1972 Atlas of Louisiana: A Guide for Students, School of Geoscience, Miscellaneous Publications 72-1. Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press.

Okey, C. W.

1918 The Wetlands of Louisiana and Their Drainage, United States Department of Agriculture, Technical Bulletin No. 652.

Official Presentation of the Governing Authority and the People of St. Bernard Parish Opposing the Construction of a Ship Lock and Canal within St. Bernard Parish. State of Louisiana, April 1976.

Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc.

1973 Statistical Profile of St. Bernard Parish. Baton Rouge.

Roberts, Nash C. Jr.

1969 "Is the Hurricane Threat Increasing?" New Orleans Magazine, Volume 4, Number 2:24.

Historical overview of hurricanes' impact upon Louisiana.

Russell, Richard Joel

1936 "Physiography of the Lower Mississippi River Delta." in Lower Mississippi River Delta: Reports on the Geology of Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes. Geological Bulletin No. 8, New Orleans, Department of Conservation.

Still the most comprehensive source for St. Bernard Parish geology.

Treadwell, R. C.

1955 Sedimentology and Ecology of the Southeastern Coast of Louisiana. Coastal Studies Institute, Office of Naval Research, Technical Report No. 6.

U. S. Department of the Army

1975 Inventory of Basic Environmental Data, New Orleans-Baton Rouge Metropolitan Area. March.

Viosca, Percy

1933 Louisiana Out of Doors: A Handbook and Guide. New Orleans.

Some information on recreational and commercial exploitation of wildlife.

IV. REPOSITORIES OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL ON THE ISLEÑOS.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Stanley M. Hordes, formerly of the Louisiana State Museum, and currently employed at the National Park Service, for the generous gift of his time and knowledge and aid in accumulating the following sources.

Louisiana

(A) New Orleans Area:

1. Louisiana State Museum
   Louisiana Historical Center
   Old U. S. Mint
   400 Esplanade Avenue
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70116

2. Archive of St. Louis Cathedral and of the Archdiocese of New Orleans
   Ursuline Convent
   531 Ursulines Street
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70116

3. New Orleans Notarial Archives
   Civil District Court Building
   421 Loyola Avenue
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

4. New Orleans Public Library
   219 Loyola Avenue
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

5. Tulane University
   Howard-Tilton Library
   Special Collections Division
   7001 Freret Street
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

6. Loyola University
   St. Charles Avenue
   New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

   Microfilm from Archivo General de Indias (Seville), Audiencia de Santo Domingo

   a) Correspondence of Bernardo de Galvez to Jose de Galvez.

   b) Official reports concerning settlement of Isleños, provision of supplies, problems, etc.

7. St. Bernard Parish Archives
   Courthouse
   Chalmette, Louisiana 70043

   Parish Archives of St. Bernard Parish.

   - Notarial records, marriage contracts, conveyance records.

8. Our Lady of Lourdes Church
   P. O. Box 217
   St. Bernard Highway
   Violet, Louisiana 70092

   Church records from St. Bernard Parish.

   - Marriage, birth and death records.

(B) Baton Rouge:

1. Department of State Archives and Records
   P. O. Box 44125
   Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

2. Archives of the Diocese of Baton Rouge
   P. O. Box 2927
   Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821

3. Louisiana State University Archives
   Library
   Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

(C) Lafayette:

1. University of Southwestern Louisiana
   Center for Louisiana Studies
   Lafayette, Louisiana 70504

Texas

(A) San Antonio:

1. Bexar County Archives
   Office of the County Clerk
   San Antonio, Texas 78205

2. Archives of the Church of San Fernando and of the Diocese of San Antonio
   P. O. Box 32648
   San Antonio, Texas 78284

3. Archives of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas
   The Alamo
   San Antonio, Texas 78205

(B) Austin:

1. Barker Texas History Center
   University of Texas
   Austin, Texas 78712

2. Texas State University
   Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives and Library Building
   Box 12927, Capitol Station
   Austin, Texas 78711

3. Catholic Archives of Texas
   Box 13327, Capitol Station
   Austin, Texas 78711

Florida

1. P. K. Young Library
   Gainesville,
   Florida

Cuba

Havana:

1. Archivo Nacional de Cuba
   Havana, Cuba

   a) Correspondence of Bernard de Galvez to Jose de Galvez; to Joseph Navarro; and to Conde de O'Reilly, 1777-1781.

   b) Miscellaneous documents contained in eight legajos concerning settlement and commerce of Islenos in Louisiana, 1778-1803.

Mexico

Mexico City:

1. Archivo General de la Nacion
   Mexico City,
   Mexico

   - Ramo de Provincias Internas - documents concerning administration and commerce in Louisiana, and the settlement of Islenos in northern Mexico and Texas.

Spain

1. Archivo General de Indias
   Seville,
   Spain

2. Archivo General de Simancas
   Simancas,
   Spain
   - Seccion Guerra Moderno (Siglo XVIII) Serie XL, Florida y Luisiana, Legajos 6912-6932, cover the period, 1779-1807.

3. Archivo Historico Nacional
   Madrid,
   Spain

   Seccion de Consejos
   - Escribania de Camara

     Juzgado de Indias Canarias - 4 legajos

   Seccion de Codices y Cartularias

   - Consejo de Indias - covers correspondence relating to trade and migration, 1767-1806.

4. Archivo del Servicio Historio
   Madrid,
   Spain
   - Serie de Asuntos Generales, expedientes 6526-6648 - covers communications between the governors of Florida, Havana and Mexico, 1598-1778.

5. Archivo de la Real Chancilleria de Granada
   Granada, Spain
   Archivo de la Real Chancilleria de Granada. Judicial records for various regions of Spain, including the Canary Islands, 1490's-1834 - 20,000 legajos.

6. Archivo Historico Provincial de las Palmas
   Canary Islands
   - Notarial records.

7. Archivo General del Museo Canario de Las Palmas
   Canary Islands

8. Archivos Parroquiales
   Canary Islands
   - Parish records.